

PLAY



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review

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The definitive verdict on the most highly anticipated RPG yet

ISSUE NO 188
THE GOD OF WAR III ISSUE

review

Army Of Two

Co-op carnage returns to the PS3

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

GOD OF WAR III

Unrestricted access to the biggest PS3 game of the year

exclusive
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one-on-one with the creator

hands-on THE RETURN TO RAPTURE

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revealed MEDAL OF HONOR

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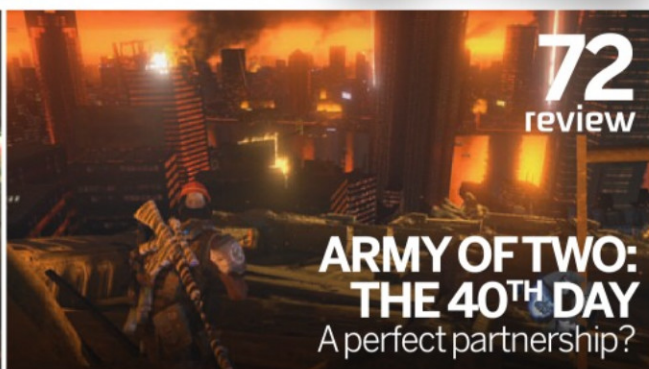


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PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

Pressing start



Hello and welcome to **Play**. While loyal readers of the magazine are used to seeing a different face staring back at them from this page, I'd just like to reassure everyone that nothing drastic has changed. A new year brings with it new challenges and this is mine, to edit the best independent PlayStation magazine money can buy and I assure you it's a challenge I'm relishing and you only need look

2010 should prove PlayStation is still all about the games

through this issue to find out why. On every page there are signs that Sony is preparing to launch a 2010 offensive on the games industry the like no one has seen before, whether it's through technological breakthroughs like the motion controller, it's new revitalised PSP or the multimedia behemoth that is the PS3. Set to become the centre of your electronic life the PlayStation brand is growing ever stronger and though it is expanding, 2010 should be

the year to prove above all else that at its core PlayStation is still all about the games.

One glance at our exclusive cover feature is enough to prove that Sony means business. We've been granted unrestricted access to the team at Santa Monica Studios to bring you the most in-depth look at *God Of War III* you'll find anywhere in the world right now. But despite all the excitement surrounding its release, Kratos isn't alone – he brings with him the likes of *Gran Turismo 5* and *Heavy Rain*. Of course Sony won't be achieving it alone and welcomes the

support of every single third-party developer to bring us the likes of *BioShock 2*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Final Fantasy XIV* and *Meal Gear Solid*.

Team all this with a thriving online presence, a growing catalogue of Blu-ray movies to enjoy and a wealth of other entertainment services to experience and it all gets rather exciting. Yes, 2010 holds a lot of potential for PlayStation and I for one am looking forward to being around when Sony fulfils it, care to join me?

K. HENNESSEY Editor

contributors



Ashley Day

Ashley recently went to a dinner party that he didn't really enjoy very much because there were cats there and they made him sneeze quite a lot. He sneezed really hard

into a bowl of soup and it splattered all over his face. When he took his glasses off, there was a sort of tan line left across his eyes. He doesn't think it was funny but we think it was hilarious.



Simon Miller

No chicken and mashed potato for Miller this month – it's been all about tuna and rice. But Miller doesn't like to let his high-protein diet get boring so

he's splashed out on some yellow rice, which contrasts beautifully with the pinky-grey colour of the tuna. He also ate a crisp, then had to do some extra squats to burn it off.



Aaron Asadi

Guess who's back... back again... Shady's back... tell a friend... Yes, after a two-and-a-half-year escape, Aaron has been recaptured and returned to **Play**.

where he belongs. But now he's editor-in-chief so he doesn't even sit with the rest of us. He lurks on the other side of the office and shouts 'Shut up!' in our general direction now and again. We deserve it.

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.play-mag.co.uk
blog.play-mag.co.uk
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk

Magazine team

Editor Keith Hennessey

keith.hennessey@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586241

Senior Designer Alison Innes

Games Editor Gavin Mackenzie

News Editor Jon Gordon

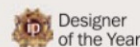
Staff Writer Ian Dransfield

Sub Editor Dan Peel

Head of Design Ross Andrews

Contributors

Aaron Asadi, Luke Albiges, Ashley Day, Tom Hopkins, Dan Howdle, Darran Jones, Simon Miller, Samuel Roberts, Ryan Winterhalter



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Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Head of Sales James Hanslip

☎ 01202 586423
james.hanslip@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Manager James Haley

☎ 01202 586432
james.haley@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Paul Graham-Fielding

☎ 01202 586422
paul.graham-fielding@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Cover disc

Head of Digital Lee Groombridge

Offline Digital Projects Manager Stuart Dixon

Multimedia Editor Steve Litton

playxtrahelp@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International

Play is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

International Manager Cathy Blackman

☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

Subscriptions Manager Lucy Nash

subscriptions@imagine-publishing.co.uk

For all Subscription Enquiries

Email play@servicehelpline.co.uk
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☎ Overseas +44 1795 592 875

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Circulation & Export Manager Darren Pearce

☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins

☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Managing Director Damian Butt

Finance Director Steven Boyd

Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printing & Distribution

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GOD OF WAR III

It could well be the biggest game to be released this year, is certainly the most anticipated PS3 exclusive in 2010 and is considered by many to be the single most important release on the PS3 since its launch. Despite, or perhaps because of, this Sony is keeping *God Of War III* well under wraps, but Play has been given an exclusive opportunity to grill its director Stig Asmussen and find out more about what is going into one of the blockbuster releases of the new decade

“I don’t want to sound like we’re being secretive or guarded or anything like that,” *God Of War III* game director Stig Asmussen wanted us to know as we talked to him exclusively about his latest game. “The thing is I’ve seen a lot of game trailers, game demos, or movie trailers that when I finally get around to seeing the movie it’s like I’ve already seen it if you just take the ten commercials that I’ve seen and put them together. It just ruins the experience and the only difference is I got to hear the swear words. I never want that to happen to our game, so we’ve put out the one demo and we haven’t put out a whole ton of screenshots. Every time I put out more I get a moan from the team, ‘we’re giving away the whole game.’”

And yet here we are. Sony Santa Monica has been incredibly protective of every last scrap of information regarding *God Of War III*. As Asmussen explained, Sony has made available very little ahead of the

game’s March release, but anticipation has remained high. It was a rare treat therefore for **Play** to get the chance to lift the lid on the game a little further. While Sony is fearful of revealing too much before *God Of War III*’s release in March, it would be fair to say that *God Of War* doesn’t need to be rammed down our throats to make an impression. The fact that it managed to beat off competition from *BioShock 2*, *StarCraft II* and *Mass Effect 2* as the most anticipated game of 2010 at the VGAs is testament to this.

“That’s one of the advantages that we have that we’re kind of a known quantity and we have the luxury of reputation from the first two games,” Asmussen explained. “We don’t have to show all of our cards. If this were our first game, like with *God Of War* we had some pretty extensive demos of that. At E3 I think we had about two hours of stuff and then we had a big demo that came out before our release of the Hydra battle, tons of screenshots and everything, but you’ve

got to get people excited about the game and at this stage with this being the third game and everything we can live off our reputation a little bit.”

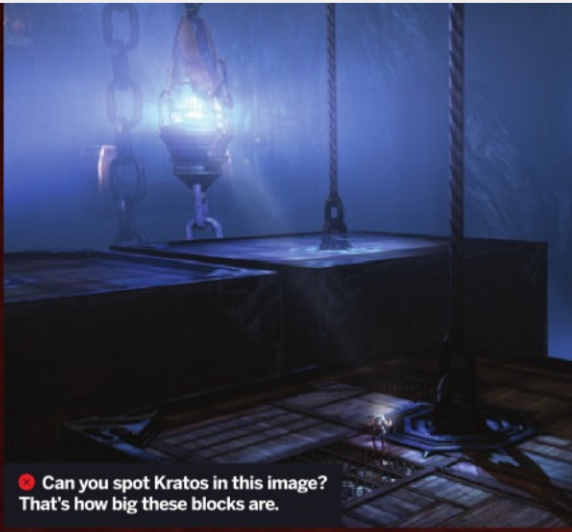
Of course it is a reputation that is richly deserved having been built and moulded by the extraordinary efforts made in both *God Of War* and *God Of War II*. Kratos arrived on the PS2 like a blood-soaked whirlwind and blew the competition away with his fluid combat, aggressive kills and epic set pieces. The staples of the series were set in stone from the first moment we started playing these games and Asmussen has been wary of changing too much or moving this sequel too far away from its origins. “In general what we’ve found is that with the first two games it’s become expected that you start off with at least the base of mechanics that you were left with in the other games,” was his interpretation. “So you’ve got the Icarus wings and the double jump and the Golden Fleece. All that stuff is still there, but we’re ▶

The image is a dramatic, high-contrast illustration for the video game God of War III. It depicts the character Kratos, a muscular man with a red and white striped tunic, screaming in a rage. He is holding a severed, bloody head of a Minotaur in his right hand. The Minotaur's head is large, with a bull's face and glowing red eyes. In the upper right corner, there is a large, dark, open mouth with sharp teeth, possibly representing a dragon or another monster. The background is dark and smoky, with a bright light source creating a strong glow. The overall tone is intense and violent.

GOD OF WAR III



**GOD OF WAR DOESN'T
NEED TO BE RAMMED
DOWN OUR THROATS TO
MAKE AN IMPRESSION**



● Can you spot Kratos in this image? That's how big these blocks are.



● The old combos remain a staple of Kratos's arsenal, but new moves have been promised.

● Kratos will be redecorating the God's Chambers in his own style.



> finding in playtests that there's a lot of people that haven't played the previous *God Of War* games and just teaching two games' worth of stuff without adding anything else on top of it can take a great deal of time."

This appears to have been the great dilemma of *God Of War III*. How can the team in Santa Monica give fans of the series the new content they desire and perhaps even deserve while not alienating players who may never have played *God Of War*, but are desperate to play it now?

God Of War III begins as its predecessor ended with Kratos leading the Titans in an assault on Mount Olympus and the beginning of a new Great War and that means starting with many of Kratos's abilities and arsenal. According to Asmussen it's all been about pacing how and when Kratos draws upon this catalogue of items. "We've

created a lot of mechanics, we want to keep as many of those as possible and we want to add new stuff too, but we don't want to make a game where we're teaching people all the time," he says. "There comes a point where you're an hour and half into a game and you're still teaching basic stuff, then you've got too many mechanics. There's a way with the flow of the game whether its eight hours long or 20 hours long that you can bring those elements to the player, let them get acclimatised to them an hour or hour and a half between each other and then it doesn't really feel like you're learning."

Moreover there has been the issue of simply balancing Kratos himself and not overloading him with special moves and abilities. For instance Asmussen and his team played with the idea of being able to pick up and use weapons left on the battlefield or torn from the hands of his enemies, but found it more problematic than enjoyable. "There's a fine balance of how many upgrades and abilities you can give a character and still be able to

successfully tune the game," he explained. "We did in the past have the ability to take weapons from characters and then throw them and use them in the environment for a limited time or doing super-moves with them, but it ended up on the cutting room floor because of that fine balance that we need to have of making sure that we're not overloading the player."

That's not to say that there won't be new tricks up Kratos's sleeve. The *God Of War III* demo has already shown us the Cestus gauntlets, ridable harpies and Cyclops and

the new layout of the quick-time events that show Kratos at his most ruthless and sadistic. Asmussen confirmed there would be more

beasts and more weapons to look forward to that you haven't seen yet, but wouldn't be drawn any further on them. As he mentioned earlier, the benefit of being on its third game means *God Of War III* can convince you it's worth playing without ruining all the surprises. What can be safely discussed are some of the new areas that our exclusive screenshots reveal for the first time. As Kratos leads the attack on Mount Olympus we will see the home of the gods in all its magnificence and glory for the first time, and then smash it to pieces.

The Chamber of the Gods, for instance, is a very revealing area of the game according to Asmussen. "You do explore Mount Olympus in the game and one of the things that you get to do is come across where the gods actually live," he revealed. "You can expect to learn a little bit as you go through there about the gods, their lifestyle and their surroundings." Beyond the Chamber of the Gods lie the Olympus Gardens and these play a varied role in the lives of the gods and perhaps all of Greece. "The Gardens

GOD OF WAR®III: ULTIMATE TRILOGY EDITION



THE BOX OF WAR

Sony reveals European special edition

THE US HAS been enjoying the wonder of the *God Of War* Collection since before the end of last year and if you're so inclined we would still recommend importing a copy, but you could just wait until the release of *God Of War III* as it will be bundled together with the new game as part of an *Ultimate Trilogy Edition*. This specially constructed boxset is currently only planned for Europe and includes a copy of *God Of War III*, the remastered, HD versions of *God Of War* and *God Of War II*, an exclusive combat arena, four character skins, feature-length documentary on the making of the *God Of War* series, the trilogy soundtrack, a heavy metal tribute EP called *God Of War: Blood And Metal*, an art book and postcards. The whole package comes inside a replica of Pandora's Box from the first game. At the time of going to press we don't have a price for this set yet, but we would imagine it will set you back a few quid.



GOD OF WAR III BEGINS WITH KRATOS LEADING THE TITANS IN AN ASSAULT ON MOUNT OLYMPUS

are kind of a sanctuary for the gods to find peace and it's the one spot of Mount Olympus that's a place of beauty where they can have their solitary moments," was Asmusen's summary. "That's their little piece of Eden they have there. You might surmise that while life doesn't begin there, it is a source for what keeps nature going. We all know that Gaia started the Earth, but now the gods have taken a grasp of all of that after defeating the titans in the Great War, that this is the setting where everything grows from."

Putting Kratos in a place as important and integral to the life of the world as that seems like a risky move and it is perhaps because of the importance of the Gardens that we see a bronze man, being referred to as the Brute, guarding the area and attacking Kratos. This almost labyrinthine-looking area will pit Kratos against the large metal man and his more than intimidating hammer. Thankfully some light QTE work will see his hammer stolen and used against him. And the QTEs are an element of *God Of War* that is worth dwelling on. Again and again they deliver exciting and extraordinary moments and yet QTEs are so often a divisive gameplay element. It made us wonder what Sony Santa Monica's secret is.

"I think it all comes down to how we stage them with the animation and the design, basically joined at the hip and making sure that all of the actions and button prompts immediately cause some type of event on the screen so they feel linked together and timed perfectly," is Asmusen's take. "It's also important that the scripting of the moment that you're watching is compelling and always stays within the character of Kratos." Now with two games

behind it the team in Santa Monica couldn't be better versed in how to make these moments work at their best and may even have a few surprises up their sleeves in terms of delivery that we've yet to see.

"I think you can expect to see us evolve them a little bit more in *God Of War III*," Asmusen proffered rather enigmatically. "You can see from the demo that we've moved where the buttons are placed, but we've also changed how we approach them a little. I don't really want to elaborate on that any more as there are things that are kind of fluff like the amount of gore we've got in the demo, but we're also doing some things that are a lot more, if not cutting edge, then out of the box for our game and you'll see those in the final product. Things that you might not expect to see us do I guess."

Having said all that Asmusen was very complimentary of *God Of War*'s so-called competition and the way they implement similar ideas to those of his title. "We always look at the *Devil May Cry* games or *Bayonetta*, which is a great game, and *Ninja Gaiden*," he revealed. "Those games in terms of nuts-and-bolts combat stuff offer a lot of inspiration to us. I just played the demo for *Dante's Inferno* and I thought the controls were really tight on it and I thought it was interesting. The Capcom, *Devil May Cry* games kind of do their own thing and they have their own language and it's fantastic and as I said we've learnt a lot from it inspiring us right from the original game. There are other games that seem to be drawing inspiration directly from the language that we have built and *Dante's Inferno* is doing a really good job at that I think."

However, *God Of War III* is expanding on what the franchise has seen before and attempting to push well beyond anything

Not even the boundaries of this image can contain Kratos's rage.

DEATH BECOMES THEM

A God Of War III bestiary (so far)



UNDEAD LEGIONAIRE: The stormtrooper of the *God Of War* universe, completely inept and incapable of protecting themselves against the full might of Kratos's blades. However, their blood does make for some lovely wall decoration, so at least they serve a purpose.



HARPY: As well as being able to tear these little pests in half and shoot them from the sky with Kratos's fire bow you can now also latch onto them and use them as a means of transport across large gaps. They don't do it very willingly, however, so expect to have a struggle.



CYCLOPS: These guys may be the children of Gaia, but don't let that bother you. Your fragile alliance with the Titans probably won't be shaken so long as you treat them well. And they may even be willing to help you out at times. Just be sure to pat them on the back.



CHIMERA: With the head of a lion, the rear end of a goat and a snake for a tail, the Chimera isn't really a looker to begin with, but as a mid-level boss Kratos does something of a number on it. Like all great bosses it's a three-part battle taking on each of its heads.



CENTAUR: Half-man and half-horse, the Centaurs have been a staple of the *God Of War* series since the first game and in *God Of War III* they continue to pose a challenge for Kratos. Watch out for the spear attacks and be prepared for disembowelment.



BRUTE: The guardian of the Olympus Gardens is similar to the Colossus of Rhodes in that his metallic body becomes hot as you hit it and will eventually fall apart. He also likes carrying around large objects, which you can probably take from him if you ask nicely.



The *God Of War III* demo hinted at tensions with the Titans.





● The battle with Hades promises to be one of the best in the series.



● Even three heads isn't enough against Kratos.



● The Brutes in the Olympus Gardens are a mysterious new foe.



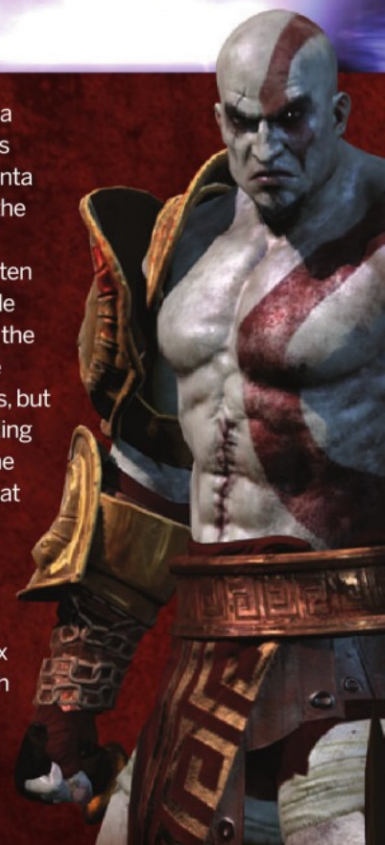
● Kratos may well have to take on each of the Olympians in turn.

> games like *Dante's Inferno* or *Bayonetta* have attempted. Another location in the game revealed to us for the first time is a gigantic open room that's filled with huge wooden crates suspended from the ceiling. "The cubes that you see hanging from the ceiling have a tentative name, but I'll have to come up with a final one, which is the Great Caverns," said Asmussen. "The idea of the Caverns is that it's one of those larger, macro puzzles that you'll find in *God Of War* where you'll come across this area multiple times and you'll have to assemble something." As a puzzle it is on a scale we've never seen before, dwarfing even the armoured Cyclops that Kratos must face on the surface of these cubes. However, mastering this area is key to your progression through the game. "With those big cubes you're putting together a set piece that will grant you entrance to another elaborate set of puzzles," summarised Asmussen. "So it's a large set piece that you can manipulate and it allows you to progress to another set of challenges."

The Caverns look to be one of the largest locations ever created in a *God*

Of War game, with each cube acting as a sizeable platform for battle. This all begs the question of just how much Sony Santa Monica is managing to squeeze out of the PS3 to make *God Of War III* that much bigger and bolder than before. We've often felt that *God Of War* finally had a console that could truly realise the epic scale of the world Kratos inhabits and areas like the Great Caverns would seem to prove this, but it's not been easy by any means according to the game's director. "The power of the system allows us to do a lot of things that we couldn't do in the past. It's kind of a blessing and a curse, because you can do it, but you also have to figure out how to organise a much larger team to be able to do things that are so complex and when the expectations are so much higher on this machine."

Asmussen believes we're beginning to see games move past their basic mechanics and onto something



THE MANY FACES OF KRATOS

God Of War's hero just keeps getting angrier



GOD OF WAR: There was a time when Kratos was a happy-go-lucky sort of fella during *God Of War*. Sure he was a little annoyed about being betrayed by Ares and having his family killed, but he was finding healthy outlets for his grief by killing undead soldiers and generally causing a little bloody mess. He was well chuffed with the honour of being made the new god of war, too.

ANGRY SCALE



GOD OF WAR II: Kratos is double-crossed again, but this time by none other than the ruler of Olympus himself, Zeus. It doesn't seem that finding out Zeus is actually his real father is making the pill go down any better. Dying and having to fight his way out of Hades probably didn't help his temperament if we're being fair. That sort of torment can really put you in a mood.

ANGRY SCALE



GOD OF WAR III: Kratos has the Titans fighting at his side now, but all of the Olympian gods against him. Those may not be great odds since the Titans were defeated once before. Anyway, Kratos is looking particularly blood-soaked and kill-crazy leaping into even bigger hordes of enemies. Don't expect to see many attached limbs by the time he's finished with this final adventure.

ANGRY SCALE



GOD OF WAR: THE MOVIE: The full force of Kratos's surging rage may be a little too much for the big screen. He may need to simmer rather than boil if he wants to get away with being in a live-action feature. Can Kratos be as effective and downright mesmerising without his fangs? Sony Santa Monica doesn't seem too sure, but we think it could work with the right actor.

ANGRY SCALE



much more dramatic and emotionally fulfilling. "You can see just a few years into this generation just how much more believable these games are now, blending the line between

what's a nuts-and-bolts gaming experience and what is more of an almost theatrical type experience while making those really cohesive together," he told us. "I think tapping into the power of the system is one thing, but all of the new features that it exposes and makes available need to be learned and be used properly and we have to make sure we're not overwhelmed by them. If you've got a thousand knobs to fiddle with you could just sit there and fiddle forever and not get anything done. There's another fine balance between organising the technology and making sure we're productive using it and getting things done. I think you can see a lot of games that look like they have a lot of promise through screenshots or movies that you see and they don't really live up to that promise." But one game in his mind has managed to pull this all off. "To make something like an *Uncharted 2* where the whole product is harnessing the technology and utilising it is quite a complicated task," he concluded.

The PS3's power alone isn't a miracle worker though and there are some things that while valued by Asmussen, he simply doesn't see working in *God Of War*. Despite persistent rumours of multiplayer or co-op gameplay coming to the series for the first time, he insisted that no such features would be coming to the game despite how cool they could have been to see. "To be honest with you we've talked about it a lot, we've looked at it, we had some good ideas and with co-op I think you could definitely do some cool things with this game," he revealed. "Doing one of our mini-games with two players at the same time would be pretty cool. There's a lot to be said for that and I think the big thing with *God Of War III* was that



● You could finally meet some worthy adversaries in *GOW III*.

THE CAVERNS PUZZLE IS ON A SCALE WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE

adding something like that to it would disrupt the experience we had for the first two games. I can see how it would be great for gameplay and it could be great for sales. There's always this push for multiplayer games because it obviously increases your chances that people aren't going to return the game after they beat it. We had to keep on following the rhythm that we had set before and I think something like co-op or multiplayer would be tampering with that."

But there is that question of value. Is a single-player game enough these

days? Do PS3 gamers expect and perhaps even deserve more for their money than that? Again Asmussen's reasoning is sound and unwavering. "I can understand why people might have those expectations because there are so many games that have the single-player and multiplayer experience, but one thing I would say to that is very few games do them both well," was his reasoning. "You say that you get better value because you get the multiplayer experience, but most of the time it's at the cost of both of those. I would say there's only a handful of games that do it right and most of the ones that do have a very small single-player experience, like five or six hours. So it kind of depends on what you want to deliver to the player. Of course the player wants everything, they want a game with \$100 of gameplay and they want to extend that with multiplayer that is the best in the world, but there is a limit to what we can deliver and as a team we have to decide what we think we can do best."

And by concentrating on the single-player experience and making it the very best it can be he hopes that *God Of War III* players will form an attachment to the game that long outlives its playing time. "I grew up playing games long before >

● Riding the Cyclops is one of the most enjoyable parts of *GOW III*.



● The legionnaires should know to avoid confined spaces by now.



● Kratos seems to enjoy nothing better than close-quarter combat.





● The final, killing blow to the Chimera is one for the ages.



● Kratos's killing blows in *GOW III* are easily the most impressive in the series thus far.



● Here's another angle of the Helios head ripping. Expect to see more of this soon.



● Kratos is far more capable of going toe-to-toe with the gods these days.

► multiplayer games and I had no problem just picking up a game that was a single-player experience and if it was really good and I felt that I got my money's worth I would keep it. It's just like getting a movie that you feel you have a connection with. It's something that represents strong personal feelings that you had while you were playing the game."

Another way of extending the life of a game beyond its release is offering downloadable content and this is something that a number of

difficult to say. There will be a little bit of DLC and we have the hooks to do a lot more and we have the ideas of things that we could do that would be really cool."

Something else to look forward to in the future from *God Of War III* is 3D according to Asmussen, who seemed very excited by the technology, due to launch on the PS3 near the end of the year. "I know that it is something, having talked to one of our engineers, that we could do. We don't have one of those 3D TVs

so we wouldn't be able to see what it looked like if we're able to do it and I'm sure that it would require a little bit of

GOD OF WAR III WILL DEFINITELY BE SEEING SOME FORM OF DLC TO HELP EXTEND ITS SHELF LIFE

games have utilised to great effect in keeping the interest of gamers and avoiding the dreaded fate of being traded in for the next big release. Asmussen confirmed to us that *God Of War III* would definitely be seeing some form of DLC to help extend its shelf life into 2010, although he's not sure just how big it will all be. "There are definitely things that we're planning and that we're looking at doing with DLC. None of it is written in stone. It's stuff that can be easily added to the package later on. I expect that there will be some DLC stuff, but will it be as big as a level? At this point in time that's very

ramp up to do it, but from my understanding it's not incredibly complicated." But how would it actually look? Would Kratos come bursting out of the screen? Asmussen thinks it could be more like looking in on a small world, living inside your TV. "I imagine it would be kind of like looking through a window and seeing a miniature world or something like that, a three-quarter perspective, little world or diorama. It will not be in *God Of War III* unless someone is sneaking something in that I don't know about so that when the TVs come out we just flick a switch and it works, but if it's really easy to do

SIBLING RIVALRY Could Kratos's greatest challenge still be hidden from him?



IN THE STORY Birth Of The Beast from the original *God Of War*, it was revealed that Kratos actually had a younger brother, but because he was weak and deemed unfit to become a Spartan warrior he was sent to the mountains to die. It went on to reveal that Kratos's unnamed brother grew up in the underworld, growing strong as a warrior in Hades and with the burning desire for revenge against the

brother who did not defend him. Ever since this revelation we've been waiting to see him, but will it finally happen in *God Of War III*? Asmussen wouldn't be drawn.

"I don't want to spoil the story one way or the other so if he was in there I wouldn't say yes and if he wasn't in there I wouldn't say no," he told us. "That would be a pretty big detail and I wouldn't want to comment on that,

but you can go ahead and speculate." So speculate we will. Given that this is bringing the story arc to a close and promising to tie up all loose threads we would expect to see Kratos and his brother meet, but it could be the spark that begins a new arc for *God Of War* rather than what brings *God Of War III* to an end. You'll have to wait until March to find out for sure what the truth is.



● The demo of GOW III showed some excellent gameplay pacing.

● The blocks in the Great Caverns act as excellent battle arenas.

and there's an interest there's no reason why we couldn't discuss in the future adding a patch or re-releasing the game to work with the 3D stuff. I'd love to see it happen. I think it would be cool as shit."

Interestingly, though, Asmussen is not such a big fan of the idea of a *God Of War* movie. While his faith in Kratos is unshaking and he thinks he would translate to the big screen well, he doesn't trust filmmakers to handle him properly. "The question is can Hollywood do justice to a good game story?" he pondered. "It hasn't really been done yet. In most cases it seems like they just take the brand and the two-sentence pitch of that brand and then they do whatever the hell they want with it. I think a lot of the games that have been turned into movies had pretty strong characters and were strong franchises, but they were butchered. I wouldn't want to see that happen to our game. I'd rather just not have a movie come out at all." However, he admitted that it swings both ways between the film and gaming industries. "You know what? Games butcher movies all the time, too," he conceded.

None of which answers what is perhaps the most important question as this epic trilogy draws to a close. What next for Kratos? Surely this isn't going to be the end of one of the PlayStation's most iconic characters. "If Kratos at the end of the game was shot off in a rocket to another planet and we were never going to see him again or he died in a nuclear explosion or something like that you can always find a way to bring somebody back," Asmussen believes. "Soap operas have done a great job of that in the past. Or you could do the prequel type stuff. He is a lucrative character and Sony has obviously made an investment in him that's really worked out and the fans really love him, so if you're in a situation like that you can always bring a character back."

But he did still have a word of caution for those who believe that *God Of War* could carry

on indefinitely. "We're telling a story in *God Of War III* that closes the trilogy and the question then is how often can you continually make these products before they start to lose a little bit of their lustre and it just becomes a situation of 'it's another year, I can expect another *God Of War* game'. I certainly don't want that to happen to this franchise. The franchises that have been the strongest have been the ones that knew when it's time to take a break."

There are no breaks imminent for Sony Santa Monica or Stig Asmussen right now, though, as their focus is fixed firmly on finishing off *God Of War III* in time for its March release and making it the extraordinary experience we're all coming to expect as standard from this series. "I'm thinking solely about *God Of War III* right now. We're definitely dug in the trenches right now. We're at a point now where the game is done and we're just trying to make it great and that's a lot of long hours. It's always like 'what are we doing next, what are we doing next?' and it's very immediate and it's all *God Of War III*."



● As well as his old tricks, Kratos has plenty more to learn in GOW III.

YOUR SAY

Should God Of War III be the last we see of the series?

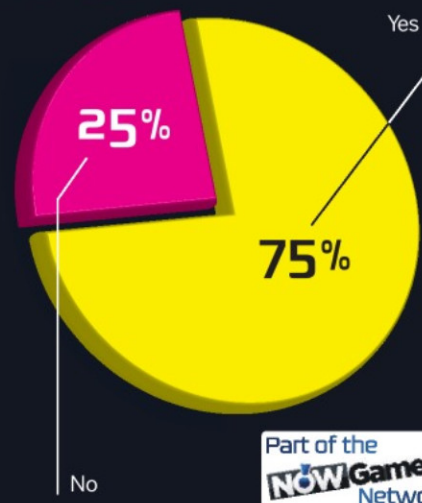
That won't happen because the series makes money. There will be more games. — **worstusernameever**

I have my doubts that they will end the series. It makes too much money. It's like when people said *Metal Gear Solid 4* will be the last one, but it clearly isn't. — **kev schmit**

You'd have to be stupid to rule out any more GOW games. It's a PS3 exclusive and it sells by the bucket load. I quite like them now. I never used to because I thought they were mindless hack-and-slashers. Maybe there could be more prequels, or a new character, or even playing as one of the other gods while attempting to keep Kratos in check? — **the bossman**

I don't mind if they make more GOW sequels after the series 'finishes' next year, but only if it's a prequel or a spin-off. No more main series sequels like Capcom did with *Onimusha 4*. — **hazy89**

Visit www.play-mag.co.uk/forum to have your say



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NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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Our impressions of GT Academy



WELCOME TO THE new year. How are you enjoying it so far? As we enter into a new decade it seems that everyone is up for the challenge of beating the successes of 2009. The

strange thing is that the beginning of this year may have an even stronger line-up of titles than the end of the last one, but while you enjoy the copious amount of gaming treats that are already making claims to game of the year, we must look ahead at what's to come.

EA in particular dominates our news this issue with details of the *Medal Of Honor* reboot, confirmation of a *Mirror's Edge* sequel and our exclusive chat with *Skate 3* producer Jason DeLong that you'll be seeing more of next issue. With its slate of titles this year (which includes *Dead Space 2*, on page 50) it really seems to be taking the fight to Activision. What's more it's putting talented studios behind its games so that we as gamers, as well as EA as a publisher, reap the benefits of their epic struggle for market dominance. It should be an interesting fight to witness and one far too close to call. Let's make it a nice, clean tussle guys.

News Editor, Jonathan Gordon



"When we sat down to produce the first Skate game we had at least three games' worth of design ideas, so this has been an opportunity to simply continue the original vision we had for the game" – Jason DeLong, Skate 3 producer

FOR HONOR OR DUTY?

EA sets its sights on Activision's shooter crown

Call Of Duty is right now the premier first-person shooter franchise bar none, but EA intends to challenge that superiority with a rebooting of its hugely popular *Medal Of Honor* franchise. Following in Infinity Ward's footsteps, EALA will be turning the traditionally World War II-set shooter into a more contemporary warfare experience. Like so many developers of WWII shooters, EALA has tried its best to spice the genre up a little, but to no avail. Now it will be taking inspiration from the activities of 'Tier 1 Operators' in Afghanistan. The big question, though, is does it have what it takes to topple the *Call Of Duty* series?



YOUR SAY

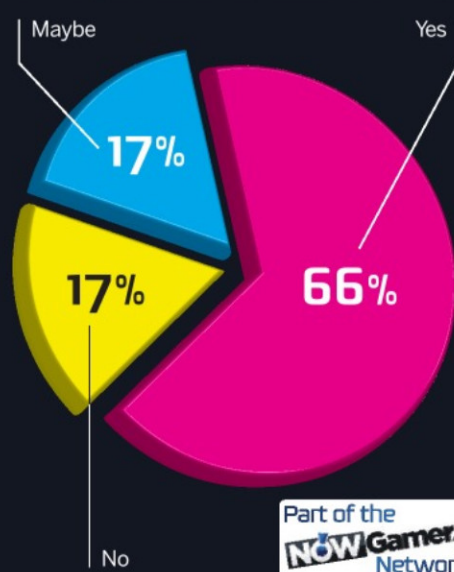
Can a reboot of Medal Of Honor take on Modern Warfare 2?

They have a big chance. The other modern-day shooters out there just can't compete with *COD*, but I believe this could be the start of an epic series of struggles between EA and Activision Blizzard, providing they get the twitchiness and feel of the guns just right. – **the bossman**

The single-player will succeed if it has a storyline you can follow better than *MW2*. As for the online part, being part of the *BF: BC2* beta, I have high hopes for DICE to bring a breath of fresh air to online FPS. – **rbl007**

I used to love the split-screen on *MOH: Rising Sun*. Me, my brother and my cousin would sit for hours trying to out-skill each other. Then there was the option to have a bunch of amazingly hard guys on one team and just you and your friends on the other. Simply brilliant. Spent hours playing that game. – **UberCool_UberGoff**

Visit www.play-mag.co.uk/forum to have your say

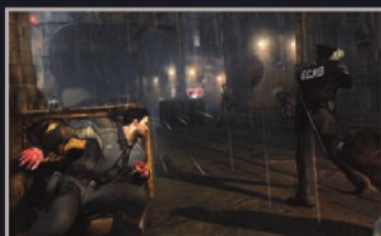


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Skate 3 is just keeping it real



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Play investigates the PS3 in 2010

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MEDAL OF HONOR: EA isn't messing about with *Medal Of Honor*. The long-time, in-house dev team in LA is continuing on the series, but to give the multiplayer the attention it needs EA's drafted in *Battlefield* creator DICE. There are few better online multiplayer shooter makers around.

WINNER: In terms of balance of each game's respective makers we have to call this a draw.



CALL OF DUTY: The only studio that could argue it makes better online FPS games is Infinity Ward and with *MW2* it again proved its mettle. That being said the single-player wasn't great. Treyarch's making the next *COD* that will be going head-to-head with *MOH* and its titles tend to be weaker than IW's.



MEDAL OF HONOR: EA's gone for authenticity in its locales, foregoing fictional contemporary conflicts for an actual one, in Afghanistan. It's worked with real Tier 1 Operators who are sent in to solve difficult situations. These guys are the ultimate force the US has on the ground and that promises plenty of action.

WINNER: *Medal Of Honor's* realistic setting in real conflict makes it a more exciting prospect.



CALL OF DUTY: We're yet to find out where Treyarch will take *COD* next, but given *World At War's* success we don't see it leaving the Pacific theatre yet. Of course we know about IW's fictional conflict between Russia and the US. The *Modern Warfare* portion of the series seems to be at a crossroads.



MEDAL OF HONOR: EALA began as DreamWorks Interactive, a subsidiary of Steven Spielberg's studio. Spielberg has since said selling it was "the smartest and dumbest thing I ever did." EALA has since made seven *MOH* games. DICE made the first *Battlefield* in 2002 and has made eight with a ninth on the way.

WINNER: The combined might of *Medal Of Honor* and *Battlefield* is hard to resist.



CALL OF DUTY: IW was formed by members of 2015 Inc, who developed *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* for EA in 2002. In 2003 it launched the *Call Of Duty* series. Treyarch has developed *COD 3* and *World At War*, ported *Modern Warfare* to Wii and used the *COD* engine for *Quantum Of Solace*.



MEDAL OF HONOR: DICE is responsible for the online component of this *Medal Of Honor* reboot and given its history with multiplayer shooters it has the background to make something special. DICE's party piece is using vehicles and superb gameplay balancing, which bodes well.

WINNER: Another that's too close to call. DICE has the pedigree, but *COD* is the current master.



CALL OF DUTY: Infinity Ward pretty much took DICE's crown with *Modern Warfare* and cemented its reputation with *Modern Warfare 2*. Treyarch did an admirable job of keeping up with *World At War* with a very solid online game. Since it uses Infinity Ward's base code there's not much to go wrong.



MEDAL OF HONOR: EALA is seeking advice from real-life soldiers who have fought in Afghanistan, but with its modern setting could it be a little too close for comfort? It needs to walk a careful line to pull this one off. Having said that the addition of proper vehicles and destructibility could be a match winner.

WINNER: *MOH* is risky, but seems on proven ground and because of that we're backing it.



CALL OF DUTY: Treyarch's last left an odd taste in some peoples' mouths as the tone seemed a bit off. Similarly there's been much controversy and annoyance around *MW2*. Given its recent track record then we have to have our concerns about where *Call Of Duty* will go next and how good it will be.

stop press



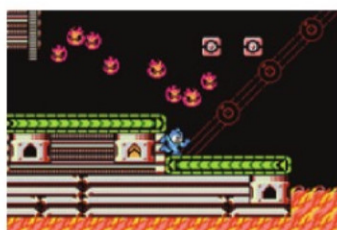
New blood under the hood

We haven't seen anything of it, we don't know anything about it and no one will tell us anything at all. Still, that hasn't stopped EA's Frank Gibeau from claiming Criterion's entry to the *Need For Speed* series will be out "next year". He said that last year though, thus meaning this year. We're definitely looking forward to seeing what the devs can do with the franchise. In other words: *Hot Pursuit 3* please.



FFXIV vs WOW

Speaking to Develop, Square Enix president Yoichi Wada claimed that his company's upcoming MMO *Final Fantasy XIV* will be a direct competitor to *World Of Warcraft*'s throne. It may seem a naive approach to things, but Wada isn't deluding himself about *WOW*'s dominance, saying: "They are a tough competition". Wada also highlighted his belief that Blizzard would soon have to release a sequel to its massive game, and sequels to MMOs invariably don't do as well.



Mega news, Man

We were briefly worried last month that *Mega Man 10*, Capcom's latest in the ultra-hard platform series, would only be coming to the Wii. Fortunately this proved unfounded and we will indeed be enjoying some hardcore retro action at some point in 2010 via the miracle of PSN. Well, we say 'enjoying', but we mean 'dying 300 times a minute'. But you can't stay mad at *Mega Man*, especially not with his little NES face.



IN IT TO WIN IT

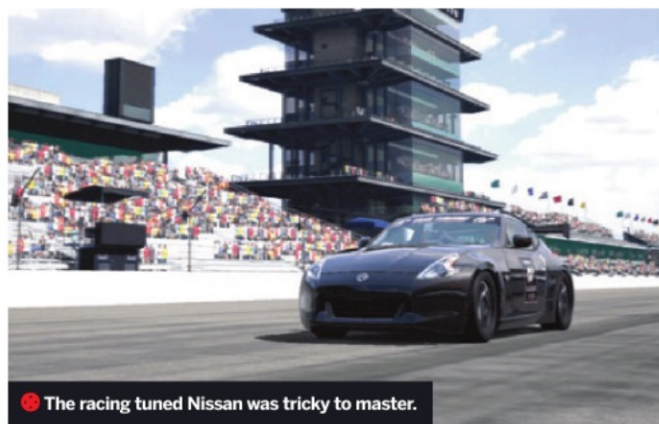
Polyphony's GT Academy returns with Gran Turismo 5 demo

Confusion turned to joy in mid-December when it was revealed that the *Gran Turismo 5* demo making its way to PSN wouldn't just be an update of the *Prologue* demo we've had for years now. But the taster you've had for around a month (unless you're reading this in the far future) isn't just a tool to make you crave the full thing – it's a recruitment drive for GT Academy 2010, which last year saw Lucas Ordonez, a 23-year-old Spaniard, win the chance to become a race driver after he clocked some amazing times on the *Prologue* demo.

The GT Academy challenge will still be running up until 24 January, so those of you who have bought *Play* on its on-sale date still have a few days to notch up some times and challenge for the chance to join the GT Academy.

From what we've seen and played of Gran Turismo 5 so far it's clear this is a labour of love

Ordonez was interviewed by the EU PlayStation Blog about his experiences. When asked if he had any advice for gamers, he said: "The whole thing is tough... Anyone taking part has to be prepared



The racing tuned Nissan was tricky to master.



Ian pretending to be the Stig in GT.

for a real 360-degree change to their life. You have to have total dedication and be prepared to make sacrifices. Lars, who won with me, was a great guy and he was a good driver, but I just don't think he was focused enough and he ended up not being ready to race.

"On the other hand, driving on *Gran Turismo* is great fun. So I would recommend that everybody gives it a go

even if it is just to see how quick you are compared to other people. You never know!"

From what we've played of *GT5* it's clear to see this is a labour of love; intricate detailing, smooth control and an altogether 'real' feeling to the racing – we cannot wait for the finished game.

Our time(s) to shine

If you can't compete with the GT Academy times, why not try competing with the *Play* team? Come along to the forums at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum and tell us your best times. And laugh at Gav if you've beaten him.

1st	Gav	1:43.228
2nd	Ian	1:44.810
3rd	Jon	1:46.593
4th	Keith	1:49.332

NATURAL MOTION

Skate evolving just as planned says Black Box

Speaking exclusively to **Play**, *Skate 3* producer Jason DeLong has reiterated Black Box's desire to keep its *Skate* franchise away from yearly sequels so that it can evolve at its own pace and on its own terms. Having launched in 2007 EA's skateboarding title has risen quickly, gaining fans in the hardcore gaming and skating worlds for its realism, innovative controls and excellent community features. While the first two elements have remained largely unchanged it is the third area that Black Box always had its eye on updating as the franchise expanded.

"The big focus this time, which was where we always wanted to take the franchise eventually, was in forming your own teams," DeLong told us. "The idea being that from a story perspective we knew we wanted to continue the story of this skater who has been the same guy all along and at the end of *Skate 2* he's reached legendary status and the next natural progression for a skater in that role is to form your own company." This has led to the addition of team and co-op-based gameplay in *Skate 3*. "You can play online with your friends through the career or play as part



of an online team. The idea for us was that this was all a natural progression for the franchise and for this character."

It doesn't really seem all that long since the last *Skate* game, but DeLong insisted he and his colleagues are not pushing themselves to make a sequel just for the sake of it. "We don't want to be an iterative, yearly title; that's not our goal," he explained. "When we sat down to produce the first *Skate* game we had at least three games' worth of design ideas, so this has been an opportunity to simply continue the original vision we had for the game."

It has also been an opportunity to show skateboarding in a slightly different light, moving away from the underground, subversive image of skaters bucking authority to something more inclusive. *Skate 3*'s new city, Port Calverton, is a prime example of this change. "Port Calverton is a place where skateboarding is embraced, they want people to skateboard and encourage it," DeLong added. "The way we laid the city out to the way pedestrians react is all about creating a positive vibe around skateboarding."

How *Skate* envisages the evolution of man in *Skate 2*.



A FINE REFLECTION

EA boss says *Mirror's Edge* "deserves" sequel

Of all the games released in recent years we can honestly say we didn't expect to hear much about a *Mirror's Edge* sequel. We found the original to be an interesting, if flawed, take on the FPS genre and awarded it a not-that-bad-at-all 71%. But it was a bit too individual for its own good, and while it sold pretty well it was never going to be a multi-platinum seller.

So it was surprising when EA CEO John Riccitiello, speaking to Kotaku, revealed there are plans in the works for a sequel. "We're still working through things like how to best deal with *Mirror's Edge 2*," he said. "There are some things we learned about that [first] game. It was, I think, a massively innovative product. To be honest with you, I think it's a game that deserves to come back."

We never thought we'd find ourselves agreeing wholeheartedly with what the CEO of a massive games company says, but in this case we can't help but smile at Riccitiello's words. And to make us smile more, he added: "Innovation doesn't mean that it all works the first time. If it did everyone would do it."



Play By Numbers

The news in digital form

3.43 million

Vehicles Destroyed in *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* beta

1,000,000+

copies of *Final Fantasy XIII* sold on day one

4M+

number of PS3s sold in Japan

15.58k

total repair tool kills in *Bad Company 2* so far

2million+

copies of "sent to die" *Borderlands* sold

10,100,094,360

total number of points awarded to *BC2* players

28.1%

the market share PS3 holds from 2009

3 weeks

the amount of time we had to write/edit/design this issue

nineteen

discs in the *Castlevania* soundtrack collection



Pay to play?

The issue of potential fees for PSN has reared its head once more, filling many of us with a mild sense of dread. We don't like spending money, after all. The mention came about as a part of an interview with Masayuki Chatani, SCE's executive VP and CTO, who said the "sell and forget" model wasn't as good for profitability and other "schemes like monthly fees or per-item charges" could be introduced. They might not, though.



The cost of living

Technology and manufacturing prices may fall as processes are refined and part costs fall, but Sony is still making a loss on every PS3 it sells. The price of making a Slim was looked into by iSuppli, a market research firm, finding it costs \$336.27 to craft a 120GB Slim, which retails for \$299 in the US. That's a loss of roughly \$37 (around £23) per console. Sony is confident this will turn around in time, however.



Kim Swift to exit Valve

Kim Swift, one of the lead designers behind *Portal*, has taken on a new role with Airtight Games, leaving Valve. The creators of *Dark Void* are at work on an unannounced project (at the time of writing) and have also hired Ian Vogel, senior designer of *BioShock* and *SWAT 4*, and Thomas Holt, a senior artist on *Dead Space*. These seem to be some fine coups for the studio: we can't wait.



Bedtime stories

Have game stories lost the plot? We speak to a man on the inside to see what the industry thinks

Storylines have been a bit of a hot topic recently, with titles like *Modern Warfare 2* leaving many players questioning how much they really want the writing to interact with the gaming. Some believed the over-the-top action of Infinity Ward's latest was a bit *too* much to accept, whereas some felt it was a nice, *Bond*-esque adventure. Needless to say, the age of the big money blockbuster has ushered in a new era of blockbuster games, often with wannabe blockbuster writers behind them. But how far can story go before it actually impedes a player's enjoyment?

We spoke about the subject to Imre Jele, project director for Volatile Games' *Dead To Rights: Retribution*. He said: "I'm a big believer in secondary storytelling, in incidental storytelling or whatever

expression you like to use and I think that is fantastic." Jele went on: "It is my hope that the future games of Volatile Games – and generally the whole industry – are going to use more and

more of that incidental storytelling. I think that's a way to get away from the whole movie analogy." He went on to describe the movie analogy like so: "Everyone's trying to make a movie, some game developers actually want to make movies instead of games and are putting three hours of cut-scenes before I can even start playing the game, and I'm thinking 'bloody hell I bought a game, not a movie.'"

It's unlikely that *Dead To Rights: Retribution* will set the world on fire in either a gaming or storytelling sense, though we do already know

We're not against story in games but there are times when you just wish a game would shut up and get on with it

it's a fair bit of fun. It's heartening to know, though, there are people out there who aren't obsessed with pretension, making every game a 'Hollywood experience' and forcing a far-fetched and half-baked story down players' throats. We're not against story in games – that would be ridiculous – but there are times when you just wish a game would shut up and get on with it. Consider yourself told, *Red Faction: Guerrilla*. *Dead To Rights: Retribution* is scheduled for a release in the first quarter of this year.



What would you prefer, action or stories?

Do games' stories tend to get in the way of the action?

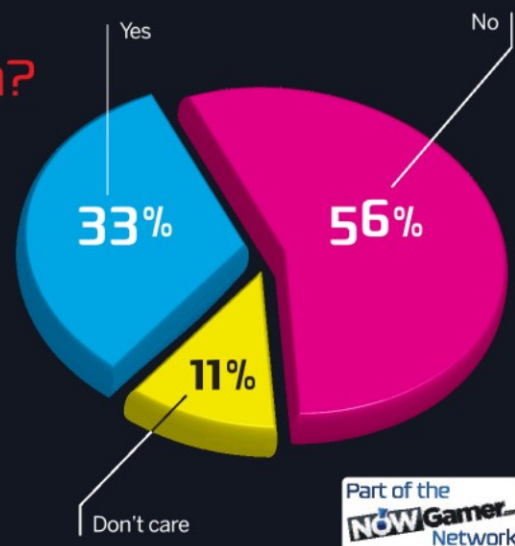
Most games should have a storyline, be it simple or complicated, you wouldn't like an adventure film if all it was was a guy shooting hundreds of people for no reason, so why a game. – **UberCool_UberGoff**

Games that don't have storylines are usually short-lived – if you don't have an amazing multiplayer to prop the game up with, eg *Unreal Tournament III*, the game will sink without a trace. – **the bossman**

Narrative in videogames has a lot of growing up to do. I'd like to see a videogame plot which could rival other forms of literature, but I don't see it happening within this generation. – **hazy89**

As long as the story makes sense and you can associate with the characters' actions, then it's fine. For example the 'No Russian' level in *MW2* was utter tripe where the story is concerned. – **tedcurly**

Visit www.play-mag.co.uk/forum to have your say



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Now Gamer
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Now this is a story, all about how...

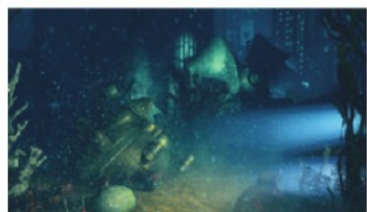
So how do games actually tell their stories? We've identified five different ways



The Kojima Method

As seen in: Metal Gear Solid 1-4, Snatcher

IF YOU'RE A fan of hour-long cut-scenes with enough exposition to fill every single second then you're in luck. With the Kojima Method not only will you have every single plot element explained to you in great detail, you will also still have no understanding of what's going on.



The Speculative Method

As seen in: BioShock 1-2, Deus Ex 1-3

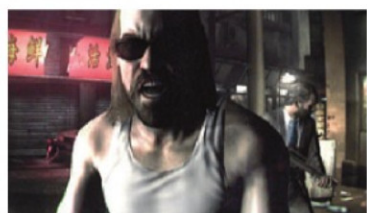
THIS METHOD OPERATES under a 'show, don't tell' policy. Rather than explaining everything that's happened beforehand or as the story progresses, this method leaves it to the player's imagination to fill the gaps. Why is this room wrecked? You decide. The thinking man's method.



The BioThesda Method

As seen in: Dragon Age: Origins, The Elder Scrolls 1-4

THE BIOTHESDA METHOD is one that gets many fan-fiction writers clammy with excitement. Rather than entering a story with a clean slate, this method sees a deep, rich history crafted for the game world. It can often result in players sitting reading in-game literature for hours on end.



The Docugame Method

As seen in: Kane & Lynch 2, Skate 1-3

SPURRED ON BY the trend of movies like *Cloverfield*, the Docugame Method looks to introduce a heightened level of realism by making the experience less 'Hollywood'. Grittier looks and out of focus shots are the way to approach this method. Basically, make it look like your mate is filming it.



The Pointless Method

As seen in: Sonic The Hedgehog, Street Fighter 1-4

THOSE WHO MAKE use of the Pointless Method are prone to odd outbursts. Rather than sticking to the Doom Method (not covered here), PM users think it necessary to give fast blue hedgehogs and green Brazilian monsters back stories, and reasons for why they do what they do.

DRAKE'S GOOD FORTUNE

Uncharted sweeps up awards as Sony shines at VGAs

Sony's biggest title of 2009, *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* was the star of the evening at the Spike TV Video Game Awards (VGAs) last month as it took home three awards from the seven categories in which it was nominated. Most importantly *Uncharted 2* beat off stiff competition to win the Game Of The Year award. Its other two prizes were for Best Graphics (the second year in a row a Sony exclusive has won the award) and Best PS3 Game. It was also nominated for Best Action Adventure Game and Best Original Score, had two nominations for Best Voice and saw Naughty Dog nominated for Best Studio.



Head to page 56 to read our roundup of the newly announced titles from the VGAs

Sony can take a great deal of pride in a job well done in 2009, though, as the VGAs also pointed towards a positive year for the PS3 in 2010. While the new trailers shown and games announced were a little thin on PS3

exclusivity, voters named *God Of War III* as the most anticipated title of 2010. Considering the impressive line-up of titles coming out in the next 12 months on all available platforms that is praise indeed for the return of Kratos.

PLAYSTATION Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

	1	Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Activision Still at the top, and with the sales figures it has backing it up it really isn't a surprise. 94%
	2	Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft A very good game doing well, unlike the last game that did well even though it wasn't that good. 89%
	3	FIFA 10 EA The third in the unchanged top three, EA's latest footy game is sure to have been a Christmas hit. 90%
	4	Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony A burst of sales around Christmas has helped this move up a place. The best game of 2009. 96%
	5	Need For Speed: Shift EA We reckon <i>Shift</i> will stay in the charts for a while as it's got itself a bit of a cult following. 81%
	6	Tekken 6 Namco Bandai Another burst up the charts around Xmas for another game that's great with a group of mates. 94%
	7	WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010 THQ It's another that'll probably hang around for a while due to the strength of the brand. 77%
	8	Batman: Arkham Asylum Eidos A late-year re-entry for the Bat. If you haven't bought it already, then you're a fool. 85%
	9	Pro Evolution Soccer 2010 Konami We used to pray for <i>PES</i> to outdo <i>FIFA</i> in the charts, now we're happy for EA's game to be top dog. 72%
	10	The Saboteur EA It's not a great game, but there is potential for a laugh in Pandemic's swan song. 67%

PSP CHART

	1	LittleBigPlanet Sony The first in our 'top four non-movers and one new entry' chart, as we've re-christened it. Oh, it's good too. 90%
	2	FIFA 10 EA No shock to see <i>FIFA</i> at number two for another month. We can't see much on the horizon to budge it. NA%
	3	Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines Ubisoft An actual new entry, and a fun side attraction to the main AC games. It's not perfect, but it's a laugh. 77%
	4	Gran Turismo Sony For a game on a portable format and about driving fast cars, we find it a bit ironic that <i>GT</i> hasn't moved. 85%
	5	Football Manager Handheld 2010 Sega Whereas we can see why <i>FM2010</i> hasn't moved, as it's slow-paced and dull. Ideal for long journeys. 60%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month

Globe Superfly-Vulcan Skateboarding Shoes

£58.50 at Amazon.co.uk

Globe and Namco Bandai have teamed up to bring you these limited edition *Splatterhouse*-inspired Globe trainers and we have to say we haven't seen many better videogame-inspired footwear creations in our time. Stocks are running out fast in many stores, so get moving if you want a pair.



Street Fighter Batsu

\$34.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Vinyl collectables for all their pointlessness are still incredibly difficult to resist and when they tie in to classic games and great characters with a sense of humour we find our wallets lightening very quickly indeed. These versions of Ryu, Blanka and E. Honda are only series one of what will likely be a larger collection.



DeLorean Time Machine Replica

£24.99 at Play.com

We've seen *Back To The Future* merchandise plenty of times, but where this little beauty really stands out for us is that wonderful illumination around the sides and back of the legendary DeLorean. It's as if the Flux Capacitor has just kicked in and the famous time machine is ready to depart our time and space.

Lightning And Snow Figures

\$39.99 each at BigBadToyStore.com

These special 'Kai' versions of the Square Enix-made Play Arts range of figures are larger, more detailed and have more articulation points than their smaller cousins. They're due out in February along with figures of Vanille, Sazh, Hope and Fang. That should get you well prepared for the release of *Final Fantasy XIII*.



Kisai Escape C

£65 at TokyoFlash.com

TokyoFlash has been making stylish and ludicrously complex-looking timepieces for some time, but now it's moving into gadgetry. The Kisai Escape C is a portable wireless device that can be linked to your home computer, MP3 player and phone for wireless control of all your devices in one. Oh, and it's a watch, too.



Unusual Suspect

£13.99 at MySoti.com

Someone doesn't belong in this little photo call as Pac-Man's Blinky, Pinky, Inky and Clyde gather for a team image. Seems like someone doesn't like being left out.

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Kanye Vader, dark side YO!!

£14.66 at MySoti.com

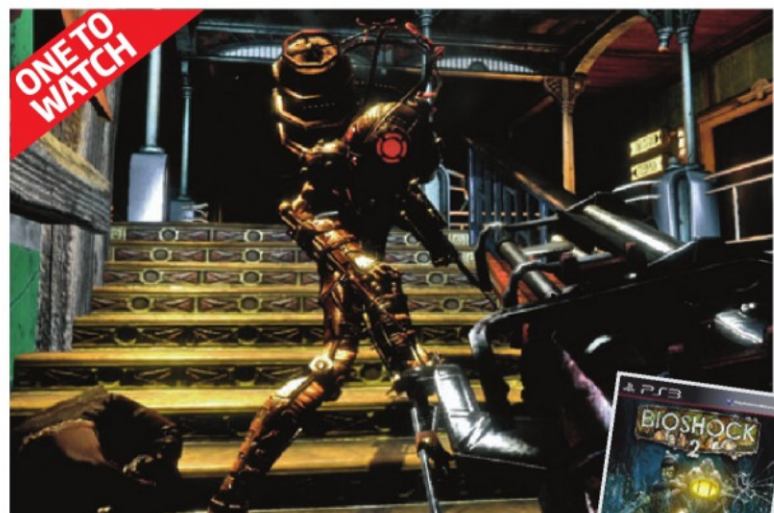
We didn't think there was anything in the world that could make Darth Vader look like more of a badass than he already does, but we were obviously very, very wrong.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 21 January and 17 February. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of Play arrives



BioShock 2

Developer 2K Marin Publisher 2K Games Release Date 9 February

IN TERMS OF original worlds, in this generation they don't come much more engrossing than that of Rapture and so our return to this underwater paradise gone bad is a happy one on the whole. The only real question is can 2K Marin match the achievements of the original game. We fear that this could be hard given just how fresh and smart the original *BioShock* was. Having said that, the more we hear from its development team the better we feel about *BioShock 2* and what 2K Marin is trying to do with it. We may even go and do a little scuba diving in the meantime to get us in the mood.



The Lovely Bones

Distributor Paramount Pictures Director Peter Jackson Release Date 29 January

AFTER ALL THE big bangs and sweeping majesty of *Lord Of The Rings* and *King Kong*, Peter Jackson is really going back to his roots with this adaptation of Alice Sebold's novel. It follows the death rather than life of Susie Salmon as she looks down upon her grieving parents and the killer who took her life.

Field Music (Measure)

Artist Field Music Label Memphis Industries Release Date 15 February

HAVING ORIGINALLY SPLIT up to work on solo projects, the Brewis brothers, David and Peter, have reformed as Field Music to present their third studio album. Uniting indie pop tones with inciteful lyrics and heartaching harmonies, expect one of the most intelligent albums of the year.



Pancake Day

Why Shrove Tuesday Where UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand When 16 February

AS LENT IS about to begin on Ash Wednesday it became traditional to use up rich foods like eggs, flour and sugar before fasting. Sounds like the makings of a fine pancake to us and so regardless of faith you'll see shoppers buying lemon juice and sugar galore. Everyone loves a pancake.

Surrogates

Studio Walt Disney Home Entertainment Director Jonathan Mostow Release Date 1 February

BASED ON AN indie comic book, *Surrogates* has all the makings of an interesting action movie with a dash of philosophy. What if humans used synthetic bodies as their means to interact out in the world while they plugged in from the safety of their home? Don't worry about that. Just enjoy the guns.



Out This Month

For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

Visit **NOWGamer**

FRIDAY 29 JANUARY



Arthur And The Revenge Of Maltazard
Ubisoft PS3 £39.99
Best Price: £24.85 from ShopTo.net Score: N/A
Imagine Harry Potter was French. He'd be called Hervé Pottier, and his adventures would be like those of this Arthur fella. Sort of.



Vancouver 2010 Sega PS3 £49.99
Best Price: £32.95 from ShopTo.net Score: N/A
Buy this game and see if you can improve on Great Britain's 2006 Winter Olympic medal haul of one medal.

FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY



Dante's Inferno EA PS3/PSP £49.99/£29.99
Best Price: £37.49 (PS3) from CoolShop.co.uk Score: N/A
There are scenes of baby killing in this game. It's set in Hell... what did you expect? Breast-feeding?



MX Vs ATV: Reflex THQ PS3/PSP £49.99/£29.99
Best Price: £20.95 from MyMemory.co.uk Score: N/A
Our crystal ball tells us this will be better than *MX Vs ATV: Untamed* but not as good as *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*.

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY



BioShock 2 2K Games PS3 £49.99
Best Price: £35.19 from CDWow.com Score: N/A
2K Games goes plop for a second time in the sequel to the atmospheric hit underwater first-person shooter.

FRIDAY 12 FEBRUARY



Star Ocean: The Last Hope International Square Enix PS3 £39.99
Best Price: £28.95 from ShopTo.net Score: N/A
If you want a *Star Ocean* game on your PlayStation 3 then you must get this one – it's your last hope.

PLAY MOST WANTED

The games that get the Play team out of bed in the mornings



Gran Turismo 5 Sony PS3 April
We're so excited about *Gran Turismo 5* that we've been squeezing ourselves in the way we used to when we got really excited at the age of seven. We have to run around a bit outside to get it out of our system.



Demon's Souls From Software PS3 June
From's unique hardcore RPG has proven to be the dark horse of 2009 in the US, so you'd think European publishers would be desperate to sign it up. Maybe they are, and we're waiting for the result of a bidding war.



God Of War III Sony PS3 March
In completely untrue news, Play's recently departed editor-in-chief Nick Jones is to play Kratos in the upcoming *God Of War* movie. See www.play-mag.co.uk for details. By 'departed', we don't mean dead, by the way.

yamete pressu! X

[That's Japanese for 'stop press']



Cheaters Never Prosper

A *Monster Hunter* player in Japan has been banned from playing online after being caught using modded data. No great surprise there you'd think except that this particular player has found himself banned from playing *Monster Hunter* online until 12 December 9999 (at around ten to 11pm in the evening to be precise). Was this an overly aggressive response from Capcom or an important boundary that must be defended? We really don't know.



Practice Makes Perfect

Japanese Formula 1 up and comer Ryo Ohtani needs to train hard to break into the elite world of F1 driving and he's found the perfect tool – *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*. 17-year-old Ohtani has got a steering wheel and pedals set up in his room to mimic the positioning of an F1 car and even plays while wearing his crash helmet and gloves to improve the realism. Of course he also uses a cockpit view, otherwise it would look silly.



Fighting Talk

Tecmo Koei has revealed that it has high hopes for its PS3 adaptation of the famous manga and anime series *Fist Of The North Star* in Japan. Tecmo Koei president Kenji Matsubara has told the *Nihon Keizai* newspaper that he expects *Hokuto Musou* (*Fist Of The North Star*'s name in Japan) to "sell a million copies" in its local territory alone. That would be mightily impressive, but even 1 million globally would be a success we feel.



Sony rewards successes of 2009 with cash prizes

As the year came to a close Sony announced its annual PlayStation Awards, which honour the most successful and bestselling games on PlayStation platforms in Japan by giving

divided up depending on sales figures, so games selling more than 1 million units in Japan receive ¥1,000,000 (approximately £6,700), games selling more than 500,000 units get

¥500,000 (£3,350) and the bestselling downloadable titles also get an award.

As we've mentioned many

times in the last year on these pages, the Japanese games market hasn't been doing all that well recently, so only one game managed to pick up the Platinum Prize for selling over 1 million units and

that was *Monster Hunter Portable 2nd G* on PSP. The Gold Prize went to a few games, though – all of Japanese origin – as *Yakuza 3* and *Resident Evil 5* on PS3 both did well and *Dissidia: Final Fantasy* predictably got fans' pulses racing on PSP. The only real surprise came from the downloadable games that won awards as *Gomibako* (aka *Trash Panic*), *Minna De Spelunker*, *Katsuragi Misato Houdou Keikaku*, *Bomberman Ultra* and *Battlefield 1943* were celebrated by Sony. *Battlefield 1943* is the one that stands out in that group. Clearly there's more interest in FPS games in Japan than we give them credit for.

IMPORT PREVIEWS 予告編 Japanese games that probably won't make it to our shores



HEXYZ FORCE (PSP)

Two characters, two worlds and plenty of maid-like outfits. Sounds like a traditional PSP Japanese RPG to us and so it is. *Hexyz Force* follows the adventures of either Elena or Revant and who you choose will greatly change the world you see and the characters you meet. These heroes have inherited the power of the gods, which can only mean trouble if you ask us.



LUNAR: SILVER STAR HARMONY (PSP)

This is actually a remake of the very first *Lunar* title with updated graphics, gameplay features and soundtrack. *Lunar: The Silver Star* was originally released on Sega CD in 1992 and spawned a dedicated, hardcore following soon after. You must take Alex from humble origins to facing the Magic Emperor who threatens to destroy your world and everything on it.



SENGOKU HIME: SENRAN NI MAU OTOMETACHI (PSP)

This imperial and military turn-based strategy game is a port of a popular Japanese PC original, which has also been adapted to PS2. You must select one of a number of regional warlords (all of whom are cute girls for some reason) and go about trying to unify the country. The difficulty of the game is dictated by which of the warlords you choose to serve.

新着情報 GENKI GADGETS!



THANKO USB TOOTHBRUSH SANITIZER CASE

Cleanliness is next to godliness so we're told, but we fear it would take a particular and rather scary kind of retentive and obsessive compulsive behaviour to feel the need to sanitise your toothbrush every day. All the more so since you would have to remove it from your bathroom and take it to wherever you keep your home computer to use this device. You may even have to do it at work. You may need help in all honesty. Available from GeekStuff4U.com

BOX ART OF THE MONTH



UNCHARTED: OUGONTOU TO KIETA SENDAN

Our box art choice each issue is usually a fine opportunity to celebrate the wonderful design and composition skills of the Far East and pay tribute to just how wonderfully created they often are. In many cases we would rather have the Japanese pack than the European of any given game, but not so with *Uncharted 2*. While this attempt to bring a little *Indiana Jones* to the image of Nathan Drake's most recent game is admirable, the execution leaves something to be desired.

日本大好き! WHY WE LOVE JAPAN

No. 28 Traditional Dress

Nihon Daisuki!

What often captures our imagination about Japan is that no matter how you approach the country's culture you always find some other aspect further down the line that surprises and inspires you even more. Perhaps the bright lights and crazy fashion of Tokyo is your thing? Well, before long the ancient architecture will begin to draw you in and those stripy socks and brightly coloured rucksacks will fall away in favour of more traditional national dress. The kimono is obviously the best known of these, but there are many variants, such as these yukatas pictured above, which are more of a summer kimono. The extraordinary designs and details, as well as their timeless grace, make traditional Japanese fashions uniquely timeless and appealing. No other nation can boast such a rich and popular heritage in its dress sense as Japan. Not even Germany's lederhosen get close.



エチケット CULTURE SHOCK!



Play's guide to talking the talk, and walking the walk, in Japan

Translation

Sony has been flashing the cash this month by offering prizes to the bestselling games on PlayStation platforms during 2009, but we were rather surprised to see *Battlefield 1943* on the list. How can we find out how that happened do you think? Here's our expert Japanese phrase to get to the core of the issue.

Phrase: Why is it that you like *Battlefield 1943* so much? Is it because it's the only game that lets you play as a Japanese soldier?

Translation: Nande sonna ni *Battlefield 1943* ga suki nano? Nihon-hei to shite taisen dekiru ge-mu ga hoka ni naikara?

HAIKU REVIEW Classic Games Get Haiku'd!

遊び 俳句

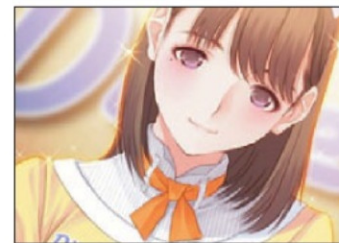
Bayonetta

Lady in leather
Actually it's her hair
Why does that seem fine?



eye on japan

strange goings-on in the land of the rising sun



Love At First Sprite

A Japanese man clearly unhappy with the state of his love life has married a videogame character in Guam, it has emerged. Sal9000 (his online handle as he won't reveal his real name) married Nene Anegasaki from the Nintendo DS dating sim *Love Plus* in a private ceremony. Sal revealed later that he hadn't told his parents about the wedding and planned to take his new bride to meet them for New Year.



No. 2 For Tea

A Japanese comedian has discovered that panda poo not only doesn't smell very bad, but actually smells like tea and can be licked. This was discovered on a visit to a panda park in China where he was filmed cleaning out a panda pen. Having picked up some panda waste and given it a sniff he even licked it, surprised by how palatable it seemed. He brought some back for his studio audience who agreed its fragrance was acceptable.



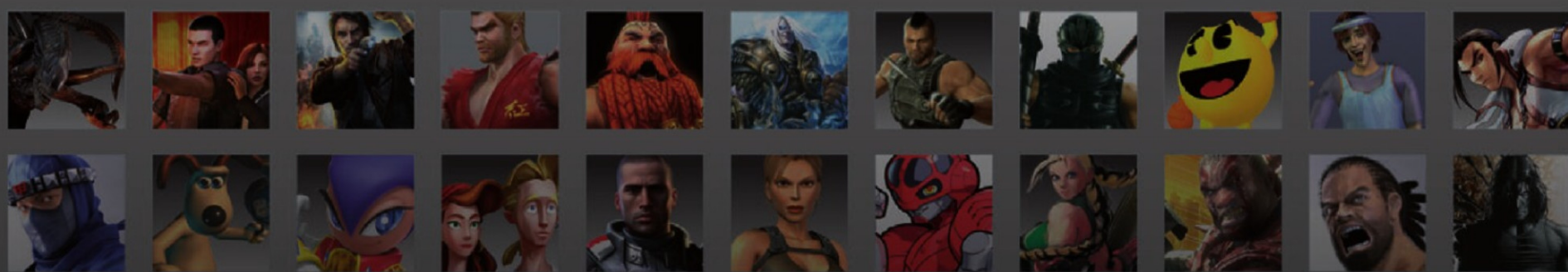
Cash For `Tache

The Japanese wing of electronics giant Philips ran a curious promotion in the run-up to 2010, offering to make a diamond out of the facial hair of entrants. All the men needed to do was pick their favourite 'Moustache-Shaving Queen' from those modelling the Philips shavers on its website. The lucky fellow would have to then shave off his moustache to have it made into an artificial diamond.

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BREAK (UP) POINT

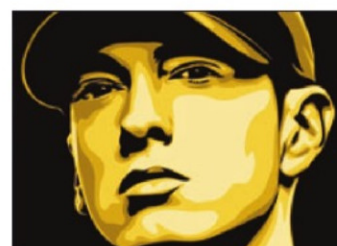
PlayStation blamed for end of Andy Murray's relationship



THEY SAY: Britain's number one tennis player and world number four Andy Murray is apparently addicted to his PlayStation and according to an unnamed source this was the major contributing factor to his recent break-up with girlfriend Kim Sears. Speaking to *The Sun*, the source claimed: "He would spend all his time glued to them [games]. In the end she just got fed up with it. She wanted more out of the relationship." Murray's agent responded by saying that Murray "doesn't play computer games any more than any other 22 year old." Murray's game of choice at the moment is apparently *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*.

WE SAY: "Doesn't play computer games any more than any other 22 year old." That's a telling quote in our minds as we reckon the average 22 year old plays rather a lot of videogames and sometimes that can be a problem for their significant others. However, many papers have been linking these unqualified and nameless source's accusations to quotes from Murray's old coach Brad Gilbert that he was "obsessed with videogames" and plays them for "seven hours a day." We rather like that Murray's a gamer at heart, but since he was playing at a tournament when this happened, we have our doubts that his gaming habits were what broke up his relationship.

stop
please



Slim Chances

THEY SAY: Eminem recently revealed his love of retro gaming, but also admitted that he just can't get along with more recent videogames. "They're too complicated," he told *Complex* magazine.

WE SAY: That probably means he can't play *DJ Hero*, which would be a shame since he has so much of his music on it and he's in all the ads.



Wounded Ninjas

THEY SAY: *Heavenly Sword* developer Ninja Theory didn't much enjoy being a platform-exclusive developer, saying that the pressure to show off the new technology of the PS3 outweighed making a good game.

WE SAY: Ninja Theory also wouldn't deny that console exclusivity helped give it more exposure and helped game sales, though.

RE-PLAYSTATION

French international offers Irish replay, on PS3

THEY SAY: Manchester United's French fullback Patrice Evra has poured scorn on suggestions that France should have to replay its World Cup qualification play-off by offering a rematch on his PS3 instead. The second leg of the qualifier between France and the Republic Of Ireland ended in controversy when Thierry Henry handled the ball before passing to William Gallas to score the winner. The Irish FA called for the match to be replayed, but this was rejected by FIFA and Evra clearly agreed with the decision. "The replay?" he asked. "I'll do it when you want on a PlayStation."

WE SAY: We think footballers spend too much time playing games. We recently learned that Robinho was living out his dream of playing for Barcelona by playing on PS3 and now Evra seems to think that Irish pride can be fixed with a game of *FIFA 10*. He could be right, but such comments will likely result in a frosty reception next time he visits Dublin. Saying, "We're arguing about Henry? But we should build a statue for him," won't help either.



The Smoking Gun

THEY SAY: Logitech is working on a UMD add-on for PSPgo that will allow current PSP owners to continue playing their games on the new handheld. It will, however, make the device rather bulky.

WE SAY: Not a terrible idea for those who would like to update to the PSPgo's sleek design, but don't want to leave their games behind.

PLAY₄ Investigates

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

How Soon Is Now?



Following a successful 2009 for PlayStation, 2010 is set to be the biggest year yet for Sony and its gaming business – Play looks at the developments headed our way over the next 12 months

Sony Electronics is fondly thought of in a number of ways – Japanese icon, stylish lifestyle brand, technological innovator – the company's achievements (should that be Trophies?) are vast and its outlook, while increasingly ambitious, has generally yielded huge success. Sony's Computer Entertainment division recently celebrated 15 years since the Japanese launch of the original PlayStation, offering a timely reminder of just how far SCE has come in a relatively short space of time – but the current landscape is somewhat different to that of a decade and a half ago, and when the PlayStation 3 celebrates the end of its third year of UK availability this March, the PlayStation brand faces arguably its toughest competition yet.

Although hardware sales alone have traditionally failed to paint a particularly rosy picture of the PS3 user base, killer-

app *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, and the launch of the PS3 Slim alongside those much-needed price cuts during the last quarter of 2009, have helped to give the console some real momentum to take into 2010. Sony CEO Howard Stringer, along with SCE boss Kaz Hirai (who also serves as the company's executive vice president, officer in

charge of networked products and service group) recently outlined Sony's strategy for global domination during an investor presentation, and with the PlayStation 3 already increasingly important to numerous areas of Sony's

business, 2010 will see it become integral to the corporation's plans.

First of all, the PlayStation Network will become much more prominent, forming the basis for a wider-spread content distribution platform temporarily dubbed the Sony Online Service, which will offer a consistent user experience across all



● Kaz Hirai is promising an exciting year for the PS3 and Sony in general.

The PlayStation Cloud would seem to have become the Sony Online Service.

Predict This

What else will happen in 2010?

ModNation Racers is one of a number of PS3 exclusives.

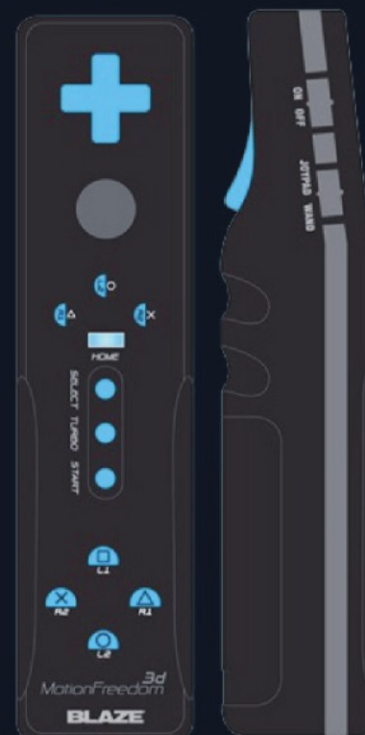


WHAT WE KNOW IS HAPPENING:

Universal will be launching Blu-ray/DVD flipper discs in an effort to push the HD format, the PS3 will be getting a third-party, Wii-like motion controller courtesy of peripheral maker Blaze, digital comics will be available on the PSP and PSP Minis are now compatible with the PS3. The PS3 will enjoy a number of exclusives including *MAG*, *God Of War III*, *The Agency*, *Heavy Rain*, *GT5*, *ModNation Racers*, *The Last Guardian* and *Agent*.

RUMOURED TO BE HAPPENING:

Hopefully the PS3 will finally get a number of firmware updates enabling cross-game chat and PlayStation 2 compatibility. Exclusive-wise *Killzone 3* and *inFamous 2* have been mooted, as have head tracking via the PlayStation Eye and a track editor for *Gran Turismo 5*. Sony has remained fairly silent on Home, which appears to be on the back burner, but the prospect of new PSN services has been speculated on, with Sky and Lovefilm hinting at future involvement with the console. Meanwhile, Electronic Arts boss John Riccitiello thinks digital distribution will overtake physical sales next year, although more full games would need to be made available online for that to happen. Think we're going to need a bigger hard drive.



Sony network-enabled devices including laptops, portable media players, Blu-ray players, BRAVIA TVs and of course the PS3 and PSP. Hirai confirmed that the service will support a single user ID across all products, offering Sony fans an iTunes-like way of accessing all of their content. "The introduction of new mobile products that are network enabled will be a key part of this process, as mobile products which users turn to throughout the day will be a key entry point to this service," explained Hirai.

The success of Apple's iPhone and its mobile, micro-transaction-driven revenue model appears key to Sony's strategy and it could also be about to launch a similar service to the Apple App Store next year; not just for the PSP, but also for PlayStation 3 and PlayStation Network. "As an incentive to turn the PS3 on every day, we will accelerate the creation of a full line of non-game content," the SCE boss added. "To that end, we plan to distribute a non-game SDK [software development kit] in the second quarter of 2010. Non-game content will not only be limited to PSN, but also PS3 and PSP." Hirai also touched upon more remote-play compatibility between the PlayStation 3 and Sony's other mobile devices. Although the hint of new mobile products is far from an admission that Sony is working on the oft-rumoured PSP phone device, the company wants the new version of the PlayStation Network to converge with users' everyday lives. Sony's vision is

The PS Eye and 'Gem' will offer gamers a new way to interact with their games.



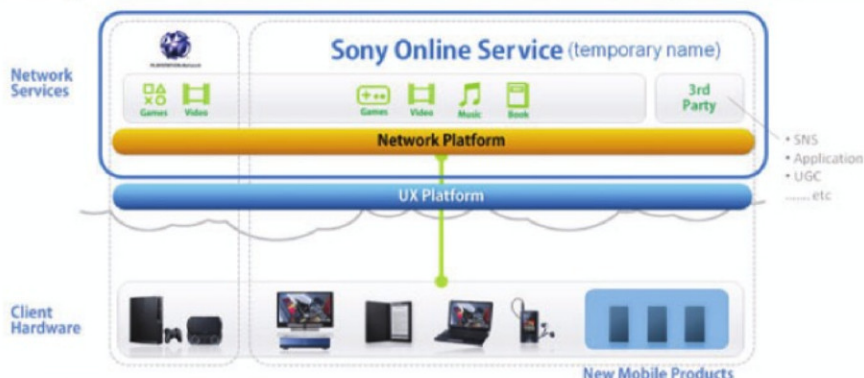
Kratos will make his first proper appearance on PS3.



● Sony revealed its plans to expand the PSN platform to other devices.

SONY
mobile believe

Integration of network service and hardware products



90 | 09.11.10 Copyright 2009 Sony Corporation

➤ that all your personal content, such as photos and home videos, will sit on your online profile along with your paid-for content (such as music, videos, games, apps, e-books), while being accessible from as many devices as possible, and shareable with friends and family. "It's not just access content, stream it, and enjoy," Hirai told *BusinessWeek*. "What are your friends watching right now? There's a screen that says all the programming that's available. It highlights all the things that your friends are watching, for example. It's a community experience." This all sounds very similar to the feature set that was banded around under the name 'PlayStation Cloud' earlier in 2009, and it could well be with us in the first half of 2010. "Earlier in the year would be a lot more preferable," Hirai admitted to *BusinessWeek*, adding that he expects the majority of current PSN users to migrate to the new service. And why wouldn't we?

Imagine being able to access the PlayStation Network from your mobile phone wherever you are, or downloading iPhone-style apps on consoles and

non-gaming devices alike. With the company aiming to generate over \$550 million (triple what the PlayStation Store made in 2009) expect to see the Sony Online Service go big next year. Very big. With Sony also pulling out all the stops to make its gaming division profitable as quickly as possible next year, gamers will also get specific extras with a new premium level PSN appearing

in 2010, although Hirai was quick to clarify what the plans entailed. "We are studying the possibility of introducing a subscription model, offering premium content and services, in addition to the current free services," he confirmed.

Although elements of the new-look PlayStation Network may sound fairly similar to the way Microsoft has approached Xbox Live, we think there's a happy medium to the plans. First of all, the service we know and (mostly) love will remain intact, but features of Xbox Live – such as being able to log in to your account via a PC and community content viewing – will be added for free, while those that want the latest content will be offered extra incentives via a subscription. Whether



PLAYSTATION
Network



● PS3-exclusive *Heavy Rain* is shaping up to be an intriguing prospect for 2010.



What 2010 PlayStation development excites you most?

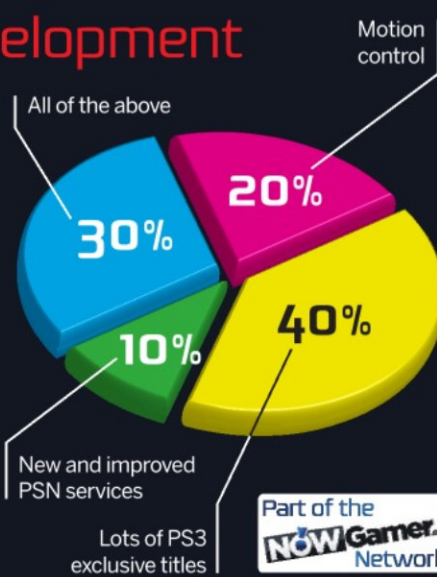
They should sort out game chat and invites. It's been said many times but my PS3 still lags behind my 360 in the online department. – **backard**

There are a few good exclusives for Sony, *Heavy Rain*, *GOW III*, *GT5*, but mostly it's balanced out evenly between the 360 and PS3. The 360 will probably grab more timed exclusives and exclusive DLC, and the PS3 can have more exclusives for once, so it balances itself out. – **the bossman**

Is the motion controller more advanced than Natal? Definitely, it's like a Wii that works properly and with good graphics.

Are the PS3 exclusives going to set the world on fire, or are there bigger multiplatform games on the horizon? No exclusives will make me explode, *Uncharted 2* is already out so I'm not sure if there is anything else. I'm quite looking forward to *ModNation Racers*. I have *LittleBigPlanet* so this should be fun. – **robinz26**

Visit www.play-mag.co.uk/forum to have your say



that will mean premium XMB themes, early beta/demo access, or something more worthwhile, such as limited video store rentals, or for instance a certain amount of downloadable content, remains to be seen.

The PlayStation 3 will also be vital to Sony's emerging 3D strategy, which will include growing the market via its content production (Sony recently announced an exclusive deal to shoot the World Cup in 3D) and Digital Cinema Technology products, as well as establishing Blu-ray as the pre-eminent stereoscopic 3D format in homes, manufacturing new 3D BRAVIA TVs and promoting 3D games. "Next year, in tandem with the Sony 3DTV product launch," Hirai said, "PS3 also



Wipeout HD could soon be appearing in 3D on a BRAVIA TV screen near you.



Sony demoed LBP with motion control at TGS with mixed results.

plans to launch 3D game titles – not just first-party, but we are actively supporting third-party software developers' 3D game development. All PS3s sold since the 2006 launch will, through firmware updates, support 3D. HDMI enables high-quality output of 3D video, and the Cell processor's SPU performs video decoding which allows us to support new codecs through a software update. As a result, through a network-distributed software update, our customers will be able to instantly enjoy 3D games without replacing their existing PS3 consoles."

Of course we've seen *Wipeout HD* demoed in three dimensions on a bog-standard version of Sony's console, but now we know for certain that it will output stereoscopic pictures to a 3DTV; however, we'll wait to see what other titles are announced (and for the arrival of a new TV) before we get too excited about 3D

The PlayStation brand faces arguably its toughest competition yet

games. The last major innovation for 2010 is Sony's motion controller. The system (rumoured to be codenamed 'Gem') was listed by the company as top of the 'five key advantages of PlayStation 3', and while specific details are still rather thin on the ground, there's no doubting how important the technology is in Sony's bid to attract the lucrative casual market to the console. "We will actively promote the motion controller as the second de facto controller following the DualShock,"

insisted Hirai. "Enabling comfortable and intuitive control, this controller will allow us

an even broader range of PlayStation 3 games, to a wider segment of users." If we've learnt anything about Sony and its PlayStation division over the last 15 years, it's to expect constant surprises, and with 2010 looking more and more likely to be Sony's year, the above could be just the tip of the iceberg.

Face Off Has Sony got enough going on in 2010 to outdo the auld enemy? Fight!

PS3 vs XBOX 360



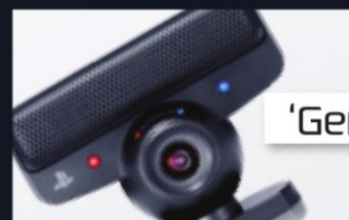
SONY



PSN vs XBL

ONLINE NETWORK

The online debate will continue to rage. With Sony set to introduce a premium version of the PSN in 2010 the two services will start to feel similar. Current features, such as playing games online and the iPlayer, will remain free. Microsoft has the edge as far as community features are concerned, but as long as a version of PSN is free, Sony just shades this one.



'Gem' vs Natal



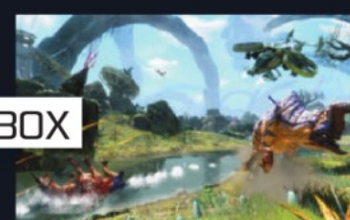
MICROSOFT

MOTION CONTROL

Sony's motion controller has us intrigued – 'Gem' should give PS3 owners plenty of options for interacting with their games, but we're still looking enviously at Microsoft's Project Natal, because we've seen a lot more of it and it has more third-party titles in the works. At least Sony's system will arrive first, so there's plenty of time for things to change.

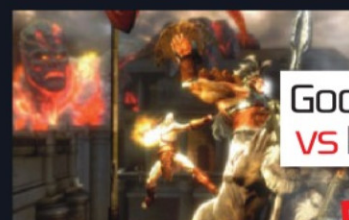


PS3 vs XBOX



3D

There are a couple of multiformat games that prove that 3D is achievable on both consoles. However, most 360s lack HDMI outputs for that optimal picture quality and as Microsoft has been fairly quiet about its 3D plans we'd say Sony has the edge. No one owns a 3DTV yet, but once they become the norm it'll be PS3 all the way.



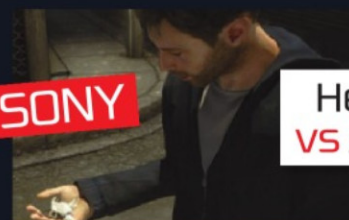
God Of War III vs Halo Reach



DRAW

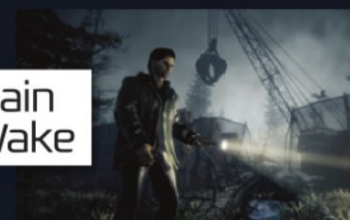
BLOCKBUSTER SEQUEL

Two huge franchises that are set for long overdue revamps in 2010, *Halo* arguably has a lot more to prove after a number of so-so current-gen titles. Meanwhile Kratos's return will be his first proper appearance on PS3 and is set to continue the series' tradition of puzzles-n-gore. Bungie is sure to pull out all the stops, though, making this too close to call.



SONY

Heavy Rain vs Alan Wake



NEW IP EXCLUSIVE

We've had plenty of hands-on time with *Heavy Rain*, and it seems as if it's shaping up to be something unique. 360-exclusive *Alan Wake* has been in development for over four years. It should finally be out next year, and we're not saying it'll be rubbish, but there's no compelling evidence that *Alan Wake* will live up to the hype surrounding it.

CONCLUSION:

Both Sony and Microsoft have a number of big innovations in the pipeline for 2010, but the quality of the PlayStation 3's exclusives, combined with Sony's experience in the entertainment/consumer electronics markets make the PS3 the obvious console to watch over the next 12 months.

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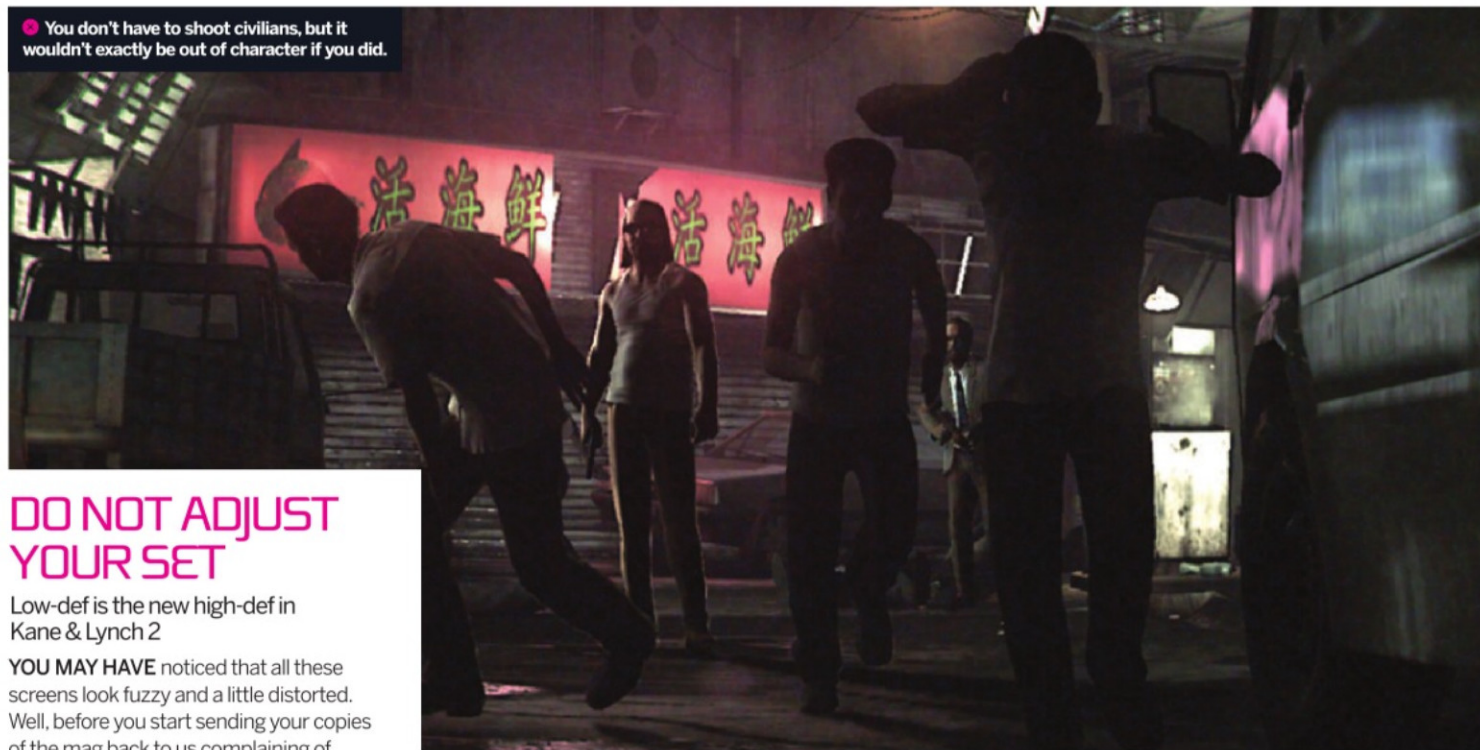
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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



● The story goes that Kane and Lynch are reunited for a job, which turns out to be a bad idea.

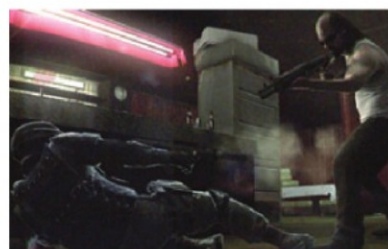


● You don't have to shoot civilians, but it wouldn't exactly be out of character if you did.

DO NOT ADJUST YOUR SET

Low-def is the new high-def in Kane & Lynch 2

YOU MAY HAVE noticed that all these screens look fuzzy and a little distorted. Well, before you start sending your copies of the mag back to us complaining of shoddy print quality, we should tell you that they're supposed to look like that. IO decided that the best way to make the experience of playing as Lynch feel as real as possible was to have the game 'shot' in an amateur documentary style.



● The real-time damage effects on the wooden dividers in this restaurant look pretty good.



● You just want to slap it, don't you?



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

Kane & Lynch 2 producer Hakan Abrak talks about making Dog Days feel real

● Kane does a lot of shouting, but that's psychos for you.

Play: The word that keeps coming up when you're talking about *Kane & Lynch 2* is 'real'. How do you approach making a game that feels real? Can it get too real?

You have to think about what you want to tell and what you want to have the player feel. It also gives some restrictions. It has to be believable.

If you get too real with the style of the game then obviously that can have an impact on the gameplay, so it's a balance between having a realistic style and not having cheesy features that don't go well with what you're aiming for. But at the same time, it's a game so you want to have gameplay elements that support the fact that it's a game.

Can you give us an example of where that balance has been very important, or very delicate?

I think one of the best examples I can give is that we are playing as Lynch this time around and I think Lynch is a very interesting character, and we try to explore that. As we know from the first game, he's still a self-medicated psychopath. We chose to communicate that in a realistic way and a subtle way, so the documentary style is so strong in the game that it's not like you're going to experience seeing cops with pig heads and

distortion of colour y'know, it's not like that. But at the same time, when you've played the game and finished the game, you are in no doubt that this guy is a medicated psychopath.

How do you go about making characters as unpleasant as Kane and Lynch into roles that people will like, and will want to play?

Well, you make them unique and cool – that's what we're trying to do. You make them... I'm gonna use the 'real' word again... you make them real. You are spending energy on figuring these guys out because it's not served to you in a classic way, like, he's a bit of a criminal but he's really a good guy because he does all these good things. We push it a bit further, we take it somewhere else. A lot of the things they do are questionable. We make them cool and interesting enough, so you think there's something here to pursue with these characters. Although on the outside they seem really... almost unlikeable.

How do you think the approach to characterisation in a game differs from that in a movie?

It's very much about what we want you to feel. So a movie director uses some other means to make you feel something. Maybe you don't directly

relate to the guy with a questionable demeanour you see in a movie. But we make you feel that even more. Maybe not make you feel 100 per cent like Lynch, but we want you to feel what Lynch feels.

That kind of first-hand realism is often cited as a reason games are more likely to influence people's behaviour than movies. Do you feel a kind of responsibility or obligation because of that?

I have the responsibility to give you the experience that I want, that I am aiming for. At the same time, I'm making it pretty clear that this game is not for kids. It's an adult game. So you are in no doubt about what you are getting when you see the game's introduction. I don't see my responsibility – just as a movie director doesn't – to be a kind of role model because we are selling the experience of this hardcore criminal and it has to be real, and it has to feel like that. It has to be believable. But that said, Lynch is obviously shooting people, it's an action-crime shooter, but you don't have to do something which is... I mean, you don't have to kill civilians, for example, to advance. That's important.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days is being developed by IO Interactive. Check the website for more details: www.ioi.dk.

● Those vertical lines are lens flare. Its supposed to be there.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Features a unique 'YouTube' documentary audiovisual style.
- Characters that are very different to your typical videogame protagonists.

- We have faith in IO Interactive to return to the form that produced *Hitman*.
- Plenty of violence and swearing. Maybe some sex, too.

READ ME

Kane and Lynch are back with a lo-fi style designed to make the experience feel more real. Hopefully there'll be improved gameplay to go with it.



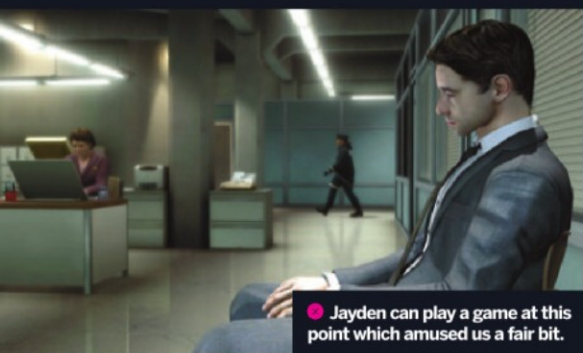
● Jayden's CSI section excited us the most.

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

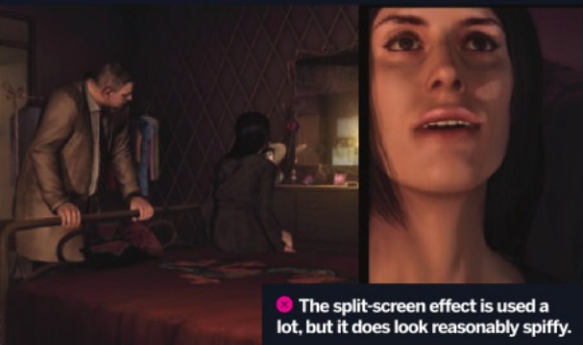
Heavy Rain

PS3

How do you say 'there's a storm coming' in Spanish?



● Jayden can play a game at this point which amused us a fair bit.



● The split-screen effect is used a lot, but it does look reasonably spiffy.

We've finally been able to sit down with *Heavy Rain* and have an extended session on Quantic Dream's hyped up 'interactive experience'. It's good to know how it actually makes us feel, how it plays and how – while we can definitely see why people might claim the contrary – it's not just a sequence of quick-time events strung together with some flashy graphics. Needless to say the preview hasn't given us enough to form a final verdict on the game, but we can already see *Heavy Rain* will be – how you say? – 'divisive'.

Our brief taste of the game began controlling Ethan Mars: married family man, architect, owner of a beautiful house in suburban heaven (or hell, depending on how you see it) and content with everything that

life brings. We would skip ahead to what happens in the story, motivating Ethan to go on a hunt for the Origami Killer, but that would miss out the most thrilling aspects of the experience. Alright, so that's being ever-so-slightly facetious, and 'thrilling' isn't the word we should be using, and it's being a bit unfair as the opening section served as little more than a scene-setting extended tutorial. Still, when a game has you wake up, get out of bed, walk around in your pants, have a wee then brush your teeth (with a bit of Sixaxis shaking) within the first ten minutes – all under player control – you know it's something you have to talk about. While initially jarring, the subtle on-screen prompts soon become second nature, and the gentle, rather banal opening does a good job of making

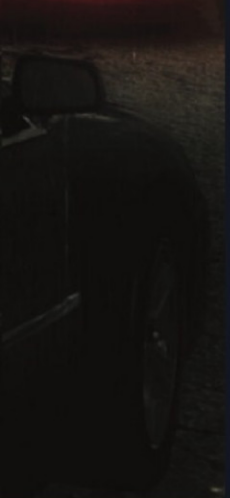
sure you know everything you'll need to know throughout the whole game – there's even a potentially copyright-infringing fight sequence to battle through during the International Dad Simulator 2010 section.

Much has been made of the control scheme already – we'll avoid calling it 'innovative', as it's more a simple case of interesting presentation than a new landmark in input mechanisms. Less has been made of how *Heavy Rain* drags you as a player into its world. We admit, it took us a bit to suspend our disbelief but suspended it soon was, and we found ourselves relating to Ethan and his plight, sympathising with him and sharing at least some of his worry and grief through the situations the game throws at him. We can't say the same for the other characters, unfortunately, as we





● Beard growth indicated depression, apparently.



● Beady Ethan's visit to the shrink can be as revealing as you want it to be.



● There's a slight chance Shelby has to fight this pleasant chap.

simply didn't get enough back story or involvement from what we saw of them. This will surely change with the full game, but it does seem that the story of Ethan will be the spine holding the whole woven tale together, and he seems an ideal character to carry it. We began disliking him for his smug,

From what we've played, *Heavy Rain* is still one to look out for

knowing grin as he enjoyed the best life had to offer, and by the end of our preview we actually felt a twinge of something for the poor bugger.

As well as Ethan Mars and his beady grief we were able to take control of private dick Scott Shelby as he visited a lady of the night who had lost her child to the serial killer. This scene contained

a long, flowing action sequence which gave us a good idea of how segments of this type will play out through the rest of the game – we made many mistakes the first time through and actually, for all intents and purposes, lost, but the game continued and simply took into account the fact that we'd been beaten

up a bit. Another few sections of the preview saw the story switch to FBI agent Norman

Jayden as he investigated the crime scene of what looked to be the Origami Killer's latest victim. This was very much your ridiculous *CSI*-style examination, using Jayden's future-shades and Power Glove to pick up traces of blood, footprints, discarded cigarette butts and other such potential clues. It was another welcome change of pace

and, dare we say it, one of the most enjoyable parts of the game, playing as a more 'pure' adventure game than other sections had. The final playable character, Madison Paige, was also present and correct, but we don't want to ruin the story any more with too much information.

It's hard to go into much detail without inevitable spoilers, but from what we've played of *Heavy Rain* we can see this is still one to look out for. The thing is, the reason you're looking out for it may differ from that of others. If a brief demo can bring up such division through the office, it'll be interesting to see what the full game can do. As for us? We can't wait to unravel the mystery around the Origami Killer.

Heavy Rain is being developed by Quantic Dream. Check the website for more details: www.quanticrodream.com/#rain.

CAGE'S CONFESSIONS

Is it an e-motion-al game?

SONY'S MOTION CONTROL system is still something of an enigma, but it has clearly already had an effect on Quantic Dream's David Cage. Back in July 2008, speaking to VideoGamesDaily about Natal and motion control in general, he said: "From a technical point of view I must admit I'm still slightly sceptical about what they've shown." By November 2009, however, when speaking to our own NowGamer.com, he said: "We have a lot of interest in the motion controller. We've got prototypes and we've had a chance to play with them and I think it's a very interesting direction." Read into that what you will.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Only a few hours in and we're pretty hooked – we can't wait to see more.
- It might prove to be divisive, but at least it's something different.
- The actual torrential precipitation in the game looks pretty special.
- It's nice to have some old-fashioned pretension in a game.

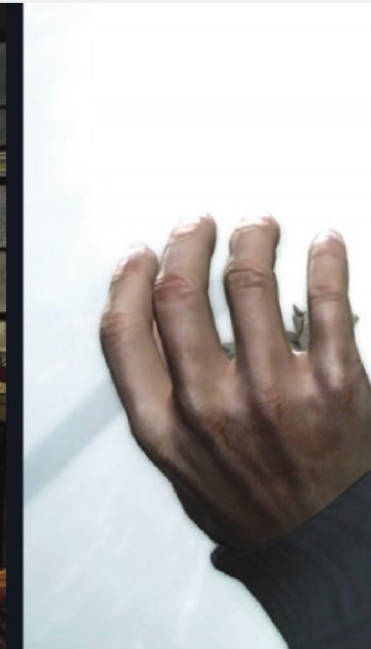
READ ME

The official definition of 'heavy rain' is precipitation falling with an intensity in excess of 4mm but no more than 16mm per hour. Now you know.

PREVIEW

INTERVIEW:
DAVID CAGE

Quantic Dream
founder and Heavy
Rain director



Like the characters, the game's settings look incredibly realistic.

> **Play:** Are you concerned that there's too small a market for something as subtle as *Heavy Rain*?

David Cage: We believe that there is a market for adult and for more major products based on storytelling, emotion and other things. It makes a lot of sense for the publishers to fund [FPSs] because that is what the market wants, but is it what it wants, or is it because there is nothing else? It's chicken and egg.

Heavy Rain does seem to need this vast explanation. How have you overcome this to explain the game in a nutshell?

When you are a developer, you've got two options. Either you go for a very established genre for which you know there is a market; you do an FPS – no surprise there, there are people out there who want to buy FPSs. The downside is that you'll have very strong competitors who've been doing first-person shooters for years... much better than you.

Or you say, 'You know what, I'm going to try to create my own genre.' I still need to demonstrate that there is a market for this new genre, but if I can do it, I have no competition... I'm on my own. I was the pioneer and I really created something, and that's the choice we made. Not for business reasons; having a strong strategic vision. It's much more because it's what I believe in. I need to do something exciting; something original because it's what is new that excites me.

What makes you think you can succeed involving a player emotionally across an entire game?

People love stories. Every time a new media was invented, it was used to tell stories. Cinema, television, writing, or whatever. People love stories in any country and in any period of time. Why would interactivity be the exception to this rule? I also see the limits of what can be done with the current paradigms. Technology gets more and more fantastic and you can do incredible things, but it's still the same games. I mean, how many monsters can you kill? How many zombies can you shoot?

Are games getting more mature? With the ability to kill off main characters in *Heavy Rain* doesn't it bother you that too many players will do this and never see all that work you put into their individual stories?

Not at all, for one simple reason: players will talk to other players, and that creates a kind of metagame. Like if you played it and maybe you killed the robber [in the shop scene] and maybe I played it and I let the shopkeeper be killed, then we'll talk about our experiences and see that, 'Oh, I missed that.' We can talk about the game so it's something interesting. Nothing is lost in terms of the community of gamers. All of the hard work we've put into this game will be seen.

You talk about the metagame in that people will play things differently, and you talk about causing players to feel emotion. Aren't the two concepts incompatible? Surely if everyone is made to experience the same emotional response, they will also react identically and make the same choices? How have you

gone about ensuring that *Heavy Rain*'s audience will experience it in diversely different ways?

You can't be sure of that, but if you take the example of the shopkeeper – people who buy *Heavy Rain* will probably know that your characters can die, so they'll probably be nervous about confronting this robber with Shelby and taking the risk of something maybe bad happening to him. So it will splinter the population of gamers between the ones who will want to do something and want to be a hero, and try to save Hassan because he's a nice guy, and the others who may think they may not want to take the risk – to not want to lose in this scene just because of this situation. I don't know, you can never guarantee what people will do and there are a great number of scenes where, sure, the majority of players will do something, or not do something. We don't have any statistics about this so far from user tests, but we

the compromises I've had to make so far are... okay. They didn't greatly affect the experience, so I can still comfortably feel that the game is pretty much exactly the way I designed it.

Do you worry that players may restart it over and over because they aren't getting the result they want and thereby ruin the game's flow?

It's not a worry, I mean people pay money to own the game – they can play it how they want. I just recommend, though, that if you want the best experience, just play it once and stick by your decisions – in one walkthrough. Don't replay scenes because, okay, you'll never know what you missed, but at the same time, that story will be yours. It will be unique to you.

Do the plot strands with dead characters really play out as interestingly as if they are alive?

More interesting. It was very important

Gameplay shouldn't be limited to shooting, jumping and driving – you can do so many different things

have discovered some very interesting differences between players.

Although we understand that some of that, as well as violent content, won't make it into the builds available in certain countries. Does that bother you? What are your thoughts on censorship in general?

It's an international system... so if you want your game to be on the shelves, you need to be compliant to those international laws. At the same time,

for me that there was one good story where you were successful at everything and one terrible story that was shorter and more depressing and annoying just because someone dies along the way. I wanted all stories to be just as interesting no matter what happened. My favourite endings are probably not the happy ones.

Do you take your influences from other forms of media?

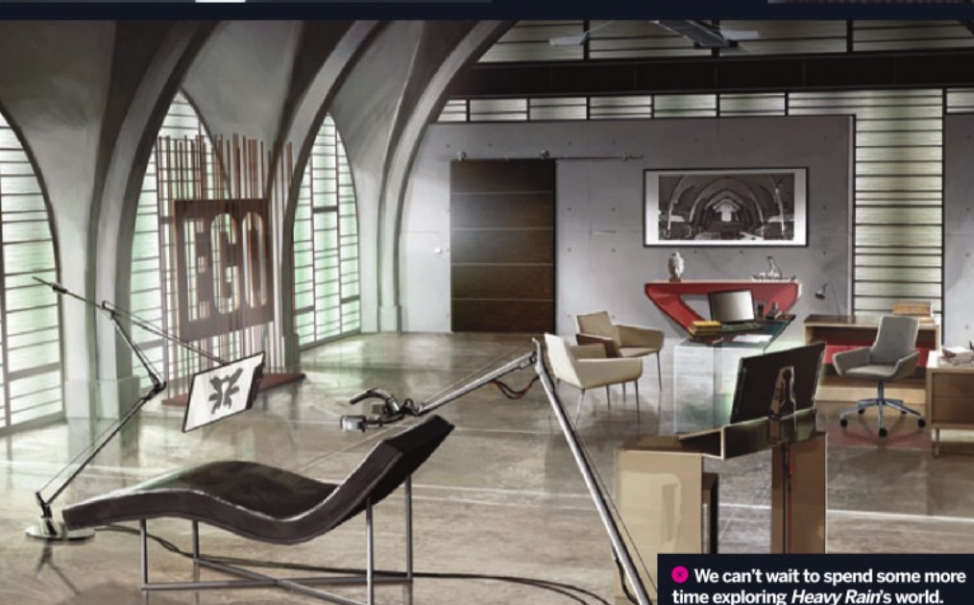
Oh yeah, you take a lot of influences



● The Origami Killer's calling card? Or something else?



● The crowds worked well, but moved rather robotically.



● We can't wait to spend some more time exploring *Heavy Rain*'s world.

and you never really know exactly where it came from. Many people who play *Heavy Rain* may think a part or parts of it remind them of *Se7en*, or *Silence Of The Lambs*, or maybe *Fight Club* among other things.

Are there any recurring misconceptions about *Heavy Rain* that really irritate the hell out of you?

There really is, although finally, it's beginning to stop. It's definitely when people think that *Heavy Rain* is 'just a bunch of QTEs'; that's all there is in the game, just pressing the buttons you're directed to and seeing things happen. We showed four scenes from the game so far and there was a QTE sequence in one third of one of the four scenes. In *Heavy Rain*, you are in control from second to second. You are in complete control of your character and there are really only very few action scenes that are mapped out that way.

Heavy Rain proves that there are ways of telling the story using gameplay. Gameplay shouldn't be limited to shooting, jumping and driving – you can do so many different things.

We noticed some pretty humorous elements to the dialogue – do you think this fits the mood of the game?

Well, you know, the thing about movies is that they usually last around 90

minutes, whereas games usually last eight to 12 hours. I mean it's great to be dark and dramatic for short stints, but for 12 hours, it just becomes very depressing. As long as [the comedy is] natural to who they are and how they behave, and where they come from, I think that's okay.

So you're saying that comedy has been used to add texture to the characters? What other elements have you used to make them come to life?

I use a very simple technique which I find works quite well. I try to start with an archetype. What I mean by that is someone who when you see him, you instantly know what type of character he is. Through his looks, through what he says or in what situation you introduce him. And what makes the difference between an archetype and a caricature is that an archetype is just a base... then you add layers of complexity and then you can surprise the player. But the entry point to the character for the player is very easy. Okay, fine I say... but now let me show you aspects of his personality that you didn't expect.

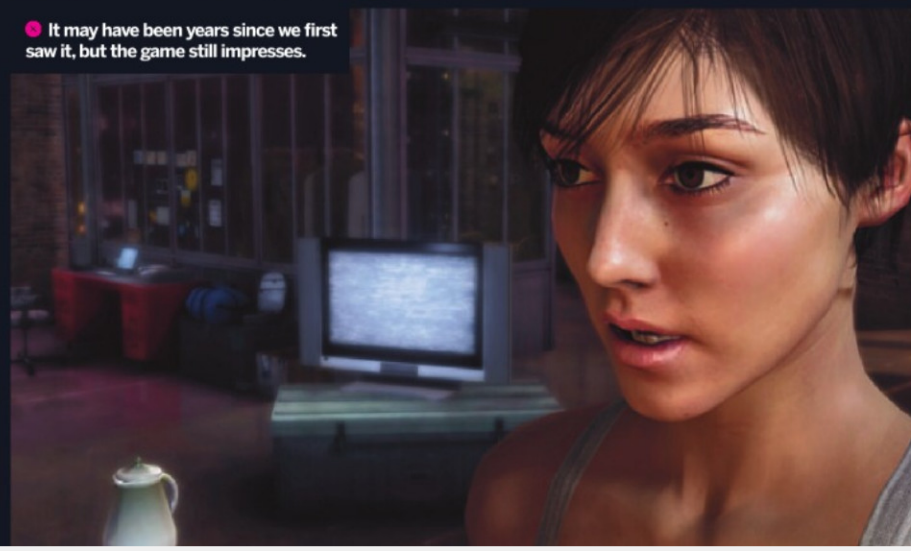
To read the full version of our David Cage interview visit our sister website NowGamer.com.



● Holding [button] shows you the character's thoughts.



● It may have been years since we first saw it, but the game still impresses.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

BioShock 2

There'll be no accusations, just friendly crustaceans under the seeeea

We were lucky enough to sit down and have a fair few hours with the sequel to one of 2007's best games – yes, *BioShock* came out on PS3 in 2008, but by then it had lost a lot of its initial impact so we're sticking with the 2007 theme. Anyway, this time around we're getting *BioShock 2* at the same time as everyone else,

be hard enough to get one brand of personal voice recorder delivered down there, never mind a host of alternative models. Second, the game still looks fantastic, and the underwater sections – remember that you're controlling a Big Daddy, so can traverse the seabed in relative safety – are utterly beautiful. Throwing in a rogue third counter-argument, there's a grand reveal of

sense of mass behind you while at the same time not feeling slow or hindered in any way. Regardless of how chunky you're feeling, you just get on with it – you are Subject Delta, the prototype Big Daddy and a key factor in the birth of Rapture. Or so we think. This obviously isn't a game that sits you down and explains everything to the player from the very outset, instead opting to keep its cards close to its chest. There's a woman called Sofia Lamb who appears to be ruling over this area of Rapture and prescribes to the collectivist ideology – completely at odds with Andrew Ryan's objectivist stance, shockingly enough.

Tenenbaum makes a return, another bloke with a New Orleans-ish accent tells you some things and... well, it's hard to talk about this without ruining it. So we won't. We did kill a Big Sister, though.

The game plays pretty much the same as the original *BioShock*, and you are even encouraged to utilise the same combos of plasmid/weapon as in the first game. Weapons differ, with the Daddy's toolset comprising of massive, brutal-looking deathbringers: the rivet gun, machine gun and, of course, the drill arm, to name but a few. Even though this is the case,

we found ourselves feeling rather vulnerable, and just a few shots from a splicer is enough to take you down (causing you to be revived by – what else – the Vita-Chamber). On one hand it's good that you aren't just a walking tank, but on the other it's hard to accept that you're a bit of a pansy whereas the later Daddies are all bullet-soaking behemoths. Maybe it will be a story element – we don't know. Hacking makes a return, but in a vastly different way to before. Gone is 'Pipe Mania', replaced by a simple timing mini-game: stop the line in the green or blue zone, win. Those who enjoyed the original hack-o-game are sure to be disappointed, but it was the target of many a person's arguments against *BioShock* so it's easy to see why it had to go.

It's unlikely that *BioShock 2* will be received with the same chorus of "revolutionary!" and "sets a new standard!" as it was last time. It's not a push to say this is retreading old ground, but when the ground you're going over is so fertile, so rich with character and so ripe for exploration we have no issue with it. We don't know yet how the story holds out, or if there are any ridiculous final boss battles, or if there'll just be a general, massive cock-up somewhere along the line. What we do know is we've been impressed with what we played, and we can't wait to get our hands on the final version.

BioShock 2 is being developed by 2K Marin, 2K Australia and Digital Extremes. Check out www.bioshock2game.com for more details on the game.

It's not a push to say this is retreading old ground, but when the ground is so fertile we have no issue with it

meaning it will have the same impact across the board and we won't have any nagging feelings that we're missing out.

With that mess cleared up, what about the game itself? Initial impressions were, surprisingly, not overwhelmingly positive. Many watching it being played were annoyed to see the sequel looking very similar indeed to its forebear, complaining that even the voice recorders look the same as before. Well phoo and pshaw, we say, on two counts: for one, *BioShock 2* is set in the same place the original was, so it makes more than perfect sense the style is the same – it must

Rapture early on that gives you the same feeling you had the first time you saw it all over again, and is just one of many fantastic moments we experienced while playing the game.

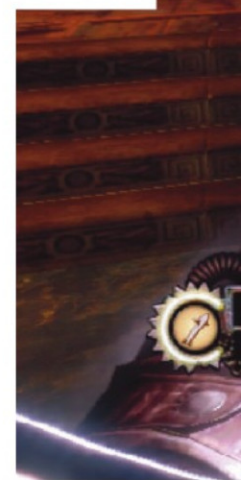
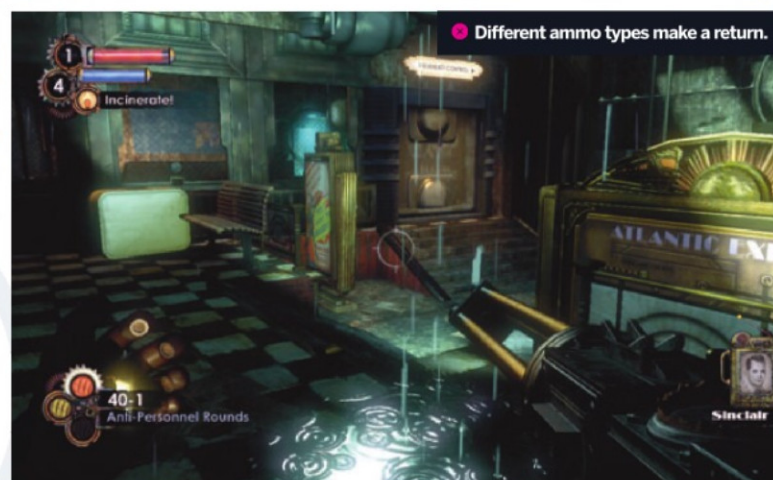
BioShock 2 opens with a jolt – no introduction, no mucking about: you simply wake up, stand up and get on with it. It doesn't take long to realise that you're different to the lumbering, slow Big Daddies we became accustomed to in the first game – you're almost nimble, but at the same time there is a tremendous sense of weight to the character, emphasised when jumping, for example. It's nice to see a game where you have such a

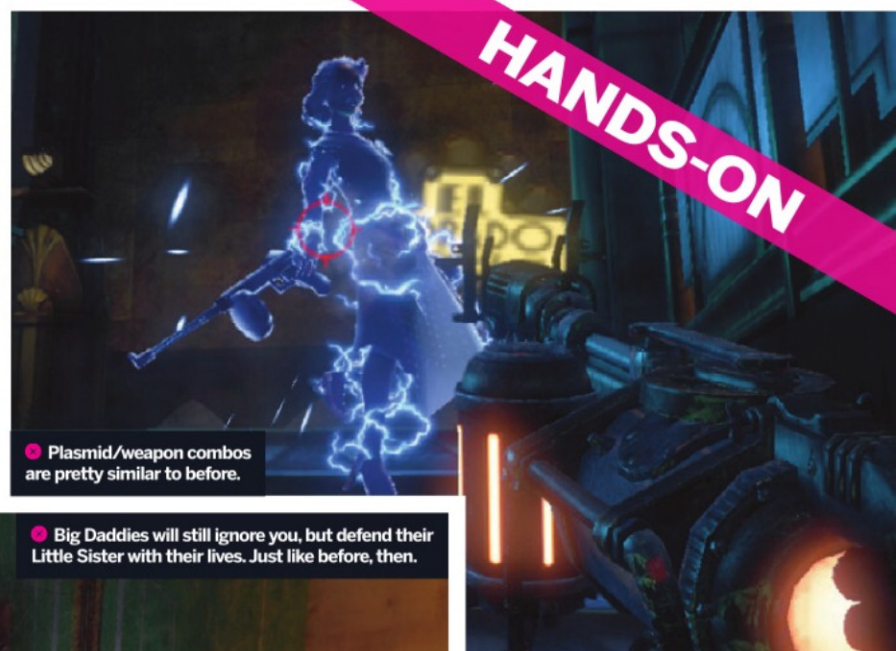
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A return to one of the best game worlds we've ever seen.
- The continuing story of Rapture is one we're keen to hear.
- Being the original Big Daddy is a great concept and very interesting.
- The water still looks absolutely incredible and we can't wait to see it again.

READ ME

Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* explored the notion of objectivism, which the original *BioShock* followed. The sequel brings in some collectivism to keep things fresh.





HANDS-ON

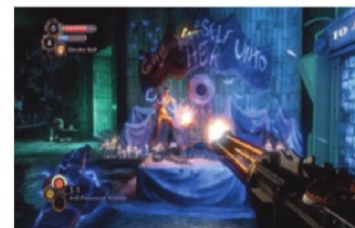


HAVEN'T WE MET BEFORE?

Could familiarity breed contempt?

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO deny that we are looking forward to the full version of *BioShock 2* arriving in the office – what we've played so far captivated everyone who saw it and it looks as if things can only get better.

D:Ream aside though, we do have one niggling issue with the game. Namely, that *BioShock 2* may be a little bit *too* similar to the original. But hey – some say familiarity breeds contempt, some say you can never have too much of a good thing. You'll just have to wait for our review to see which side we fall on.

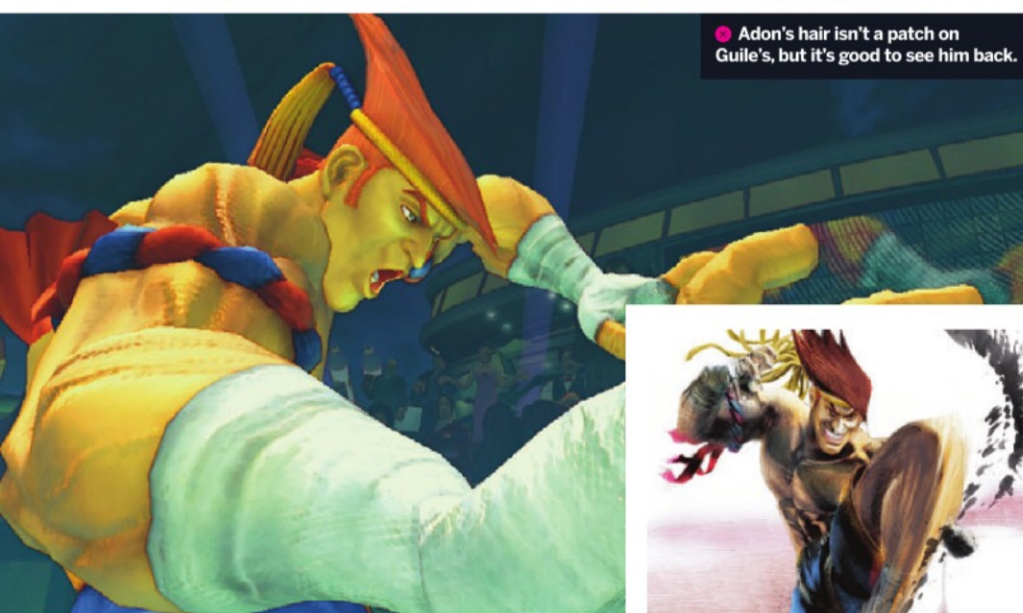




● We'd say a knife was unfair, but others can shoot fire from their hands.



● Missed. Idiot.



● Adon's hair isn't a patch on Guile's, but it's good to see him back.



BARREL-BASHING, CAR-SMASHING

Because beating up objects is big and clever

ALSO RETURNING FROM the world of The Past are bonus stages, meaning you can once again beat the crap out of a random car for no good reason apart from making yourself look cooler to your contemporaries. Kids these days. Another triumphant comeback will be *SFIV*'s barrel bashing, though obviously this was never as good as the car bit.

● This looks far more like a disco dance than a street fight.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Super Street Fighter IV

Bringing a knife to the fire(ball)fight

The staggered release of details for Capcom's upcoming *Super Street Fighter IV* have meant the news ticker has been kept busy over the last few months. Well, it would have been had we actually been using a news ticker, and if we actually knew what a news ticker was.

This update to the stunning *Street Fighter IV* is looking more and more appealing thanks to a combination of factors. While it was once dismissed as being tarted up DLC by some libel-courting vagabonds, Capcom has proved it's putting more than enough new content in to justify the (roughly) £30 price. The obvious additions are the eight new characters, with three more recently revealed (at the time of writing, naturally). First up is Guy, from *Final Fight* and *Street Fighter Alpha*, who will surely return to prove once again he's far better in the one-on-one fighter than he is in the side-scroller. Backing up his

old chum comes Cody, again from *Final Fight* as well as *Street Fighter Alpha 3* and wearing the same prison gear he had on years ago. To be honest, we wouldn't make fun of his uncleanness as blondie has brought a knife with him. Rounding up this trio is Adon, another *Alpha* refugee and Sagat's one-time apprentice. All of the characters look the same as they did when we last saw them years ago, just with the requisite 3D'd up look *SFIV* gave the original cast.

Online sees a shake-up for the update, introducing two-on-two and four-on-four battles along with 'Endless Battle' – a knockout tournament for up to eight players. Replay mode will allow players to watch replays of other battles, which will help those obsessed with studying how others play. *SFIV* was great, *SSFIV* could be greater.

Go to www.streetfighter.com for more details on the Capcom-developed **Super Street Fighter IV**.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's one of our favourite recent fighting games.
- The online improvements could be spectacular.
- The return of the bonus stages makes us happy.
- You are not forced to choose Cody.

READ ME

The first time I saw *Super Street Fighter II* in an arcade he thought it was a cheap knock-off of the original. The fool.



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker

We were privy to the Peace Walker demo a few months back, we've now had the opportunity to play it again – this time in English

HANDS-ON

05:23



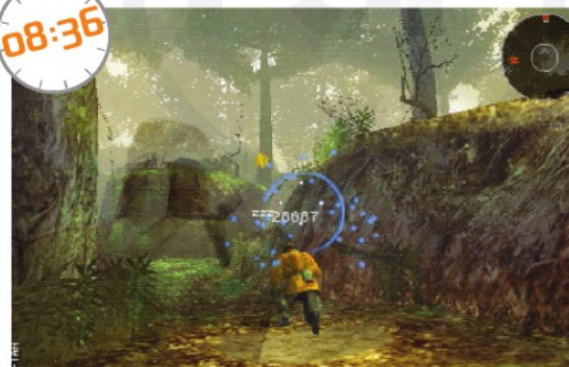
WE'RE GOING TO ignore the opening tutorial and cut-scene, as they would have eaten up most of the opening 20 minutes. Safe to say, you know damn well this is an *MGS* game from the get-go. Ridiculously wordy pop-philosophy that we can't help but love: go!

06:01



WITHIN THE FIRST minute of actual play we, naturally, decided to shoot some coconuts. While seemingly frivolous on the outside, this short section acts as a fine on-the-job tutorial in a small, safe, fenced-off area. Though you can blow yourself up with grenades.

08:36



OUR FIRST ENEMY encounter and a good chance to test out *Peace Walker's* two control schemes. We opted for the first choice, with face buttons operating as camera and aiming controls. It must work pretty well, as we bullseyed this dolt with a tranquiliser dart.

10:02



AN UNEVENTFUL COUPLE of minutes pass before we encounter this chap, soon after running out of battery for our radar. The exclamation mark above his head immediately gave us warm fuzzy feelings: this is indeed *MGS*. And he is indeed alerted to our presence.

11:57



OOPS. IT WOULD appear that sudden death syndrome can come about as a side effect of being shot a lot. We think the downfall began when that bloke in the last picture saw us, and we were stupid enough to let him sound the alarm.

13:01



RETRY, THIS TIME with more calmness and more of what Snake is good at – hiding behind stacks of wood, peeking out at oblivious guards. The controls are initially fiddly, but soon enough become second nature. Extended sessions may result in PSP claw, though.

15:35



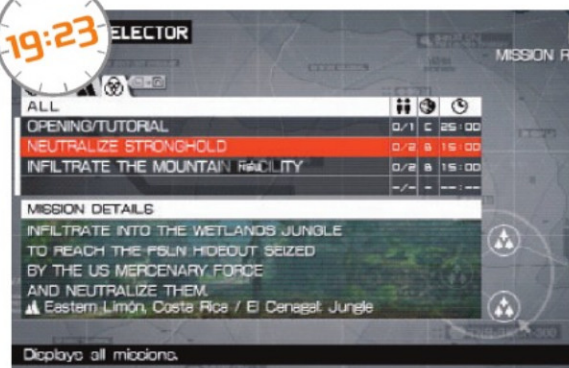
SLOWLY, SLOWLY, CATCHY monkey. We edge our way around, picking off this selection of guards one by one, making sure the alarm is never raised. It feels so good to be back with Snake – he's still just as fun to beat people up with as ever.

18:46



WITH THE FIRST real section of the game completed, it's time to admire our handiwork: barring the alarm/death scenario we haven't been seen once, nor have we had to kill any poor guards. The game rewards us with a special screenshot to use as our PSP background.

19:23



BUT THE DEMO isn't over and there's a lot more to do – just as before in the Japanese version. A few missions are available and can be replayed to your heart's content. Multiplayer is also available for those who know people with other PSPs.

SUMMARY While we were impressed with *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* before, we're even happier now we've been able to play it in English – hearing David Hayter reprise the role of Snake is always 'a good thing', after all. The game itself does have a short acclimatisation period, but once that's passed it's all about some classic *Metal Gear* action.



In Rush, defending these chests is the name of the game. Or attacking them, depending on which phase you're playing.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

But is it beta than the original?

It's not often that we get anything first, with multifranchise developers often considering the PS3 to be 'the other platform'. It's warmed our cockles then, to get a hold of the *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* beta code a calendar month ahead of its Xbox counterpart, even if it's hardly likely to tide us over until the game's release in March with its mere single game mode and map.

DICE was always going to have a battle on its hands with *Modern Warfare 2* still no doubt the dominant force even as we head into spring. While the original *Bad Company* was fairly successful, it paled on the new scale set by Infinity Ward. But with its multitude of vehicles, objective-focused modes and sprawling maps, *Battlefield* has always been a very different kind of war beast, eschewing Hollywood blam for a sprinkling of that rare console commodity: realism.

Arica Harbor, the Middle Eastern-themed location of this beta map is a sight to behold. Smoke plumes impressively from distant battlefields, sand and other detritus are kicked up in the breeze and the pops and whizzes of variously sized ordinance meet your ears drowned in the muffle of distance, their echoes clattering to and fro from the local topography.

Rush is essentially the same as Gold Rush – the game type that came, initially, all on its lonesome in

Bad Company. Teams are split into attackers and defenders and after one round they switch roles. Objective points alpha and bravo begin at one end of the map, wedged up against the cornered attacking team. These usually fall pretty quickly as the defenders will find it near impossible to keep up with the fast pace and very local respawns. As the defenders are pushed back, however, their situation becomes more tenable, but the desperate endgame of defending or assaulting the final capture point is where the most exciting moments lie.

Four classes are available in the beta: Assault, Engineer, Medic and Recon. Initially, we thought that Assault sounded the most fun, but with limited weapons range and an uncanny ability to get run over by tanks and jeeps, we soon switched to Recon, taking up a sniping position in a small bush. This didn't work out too well either with our opponents doing an admirable job of staying out of shrub-sight. We don't care enough about other members of our team to bother with the role of Medic, but the ability to fix up your buddy's

tank both after and even while it's under intense enemy fire was very satisfying. We also found that the Engineer comes with a bandolier of RPGs just in case you come across the odd enemy vehicle.

The vehicles, much like the visuals, have received a welcome upgrade and are spectacular. You may remember the flame of joy ignited in boarding a tank in *Bad Company* was all too quickly doused when you realised that all that mobile armour was made from recycled cans of fizzy pop. The vehicles on offer – tanks, jeeps, ATVs and UAVs – are far more robust, making an oncoming battle machine a far more intimidating prospect. Being an Engineer we were even able to leap out and complete some emergency repairs before resuming our death trundle.

The squad mechanics DICE has created certainly work. That is to say that offering each player a balanced group of mates taking the role of one of the aforementioned class archetypes functions as it should. No one else we met, however, appeared to understand that they were in a

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Turbo-realism. The harsh daylight is stunning. Bring your sunblock.
- Tanks. They don't pop like balloons any more. Which is nice.
- Sensible classes. One of each class to form a balanced squad. Simple.
- Groups within groups. Squad assignment appears to work this time.

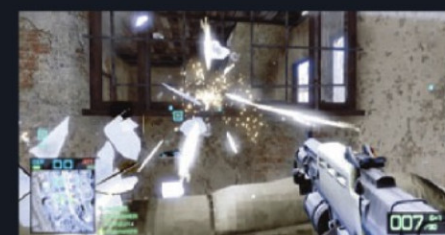


● The smoke effects in *Bad Company 2* are among the best we've ever seen. Especially at a distance.

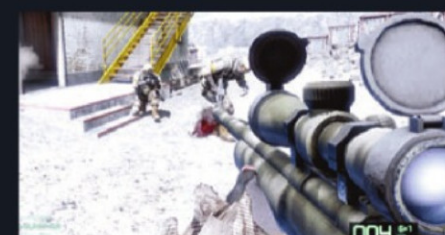


SURPRISE FOR THE ENEMY

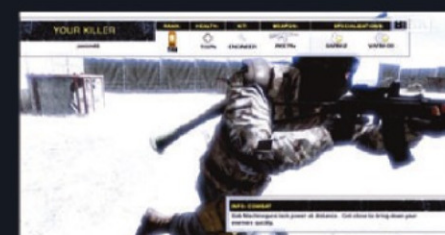
Catching your foe unawares is key to success



FIRING RANDOMLY THROUGH windows into rooms where you know guys are camping always induces panic. Expecting a grenade, or worse, its occupants are either mown down or make a break for the door. In this instance, they did a decent job of pelting us with bullets regardless.



PELTING IT OUT of the front door, they failed to notice that we were waiting for them outside. Sadly, we'd forgotten about our recent class selection and instead of a hail of lead from an assault rifle, we managed only one daft shot from our sniper, hitting the enemy in the foot...



CHUCKLING TO OURSELVES, we were forced to accept our inevitable death before we even had time to reload. This is our killer – who was actually behind us – here. Beneath that balaclava is the face of smugness itself. Perhaps we'll stick with the assault rifle next time.

squad, with the three other members of our team peeling off in every direction with little regard for any actual tactics. Obviously, this is not a mechanic designed to work well with strangers.

UAVs can be remotely piloted and take the form of RC choppers. Very useful for recon, but hopeless in a fight – they have rockets, but take about an hour to reload and are easily shot down – rather like some of the other finer points are a tactical tool and something whose usefulness we were unable to reasonably test in this beta, where it was essentially every man for himself.

Even testing a mere single map and game mode, *Bad Company 2* as a multiplayer entity is very impressive. It has the edge both visually and tactically over *MW2*. To say it's better, though, would be a fallacy. It's merely war of a different flavour. What we can say with certainty is that players hankering after a more real, tactically oriented experience aren't going to look back come March.

Battlefield: Bad Company 2 is being developed by DICE over in Stockholm. Find out more at <http://battlefieldbadcompany2.com>

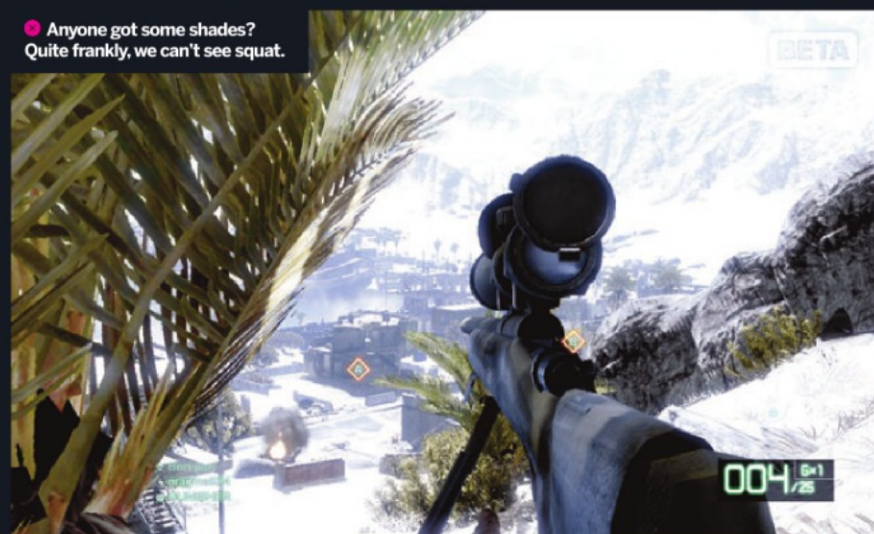
READ ME

It's *Modern Warfare*, but only in the sense of being modern, and rammed with war. Its multiplayer maps are vast and full of vehicular mayhem. Teamwork is more vital in *Bad Company 2*'s grand machine.



● The destruction is a little more analogue this time, with more rubble and less corpse-dumping.

● Anyone got some shades? Quite frankly, we can't see squat.



PREVIEW



● We remember when these were called quad bikes.



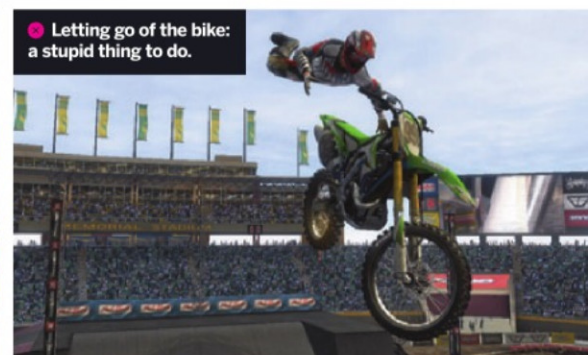
● The fire isn't from the bikes, unfortunately.



● It's nice he has time to take in the scenery from up there.



● It doesn't play as much like *MotorStorm* as it looks.



● Letting go of the bike: a stupid thing to do.



● Track deformation has a massive effect later on in races.

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

MX Vs ATV Reflex

Gentlemen, start your acronyms

As a follow-up to the rather poorly received *MX Vs ATV Untamed* (58%), this sequel – built from the ground up – doesn't have huge shoes to fill. It would appear from our hands-on with the title that it fills them with ease, though that's not the hardest thing in the world to do.

Fans of those sports that involve dirt bikes and quad bikes should be well catered for by *Reflex*, with dozens of real-life riders backed up by a decent selection of vehicles – bikes, ATVs, buggies and trucks – and a handful of different modes to blitz through. Standard races are made far more interesting through a combination of the Reflex control

system and deformable terrain. The former is a system where the left stick controls vehicle movement and the right controls the rider – what it basically amounts to is steering and balancing at the same time. We found it initially confusing, but it soon became easy enough, if not a bit unwieldy at times, throwing our rider off his bike for seemingly no reason. The latter system sees terrain chewed up by all the vehicles on the track, meaning you may have to modify your route on later laps in order to avoid areas a bit worse for wear. It's a nice touch and adds a tactical element that could help hoist *Reflex* away from mediocrity. One element we had hoped to see

improvement on was looks, which aren't spectacular, unfortunately.

The game has been out in the US for a while and has garnered some decent press. We'll just have to wait and see how it's received over here, and if an online community will form to support it like has happened in the past. We definitely had a bit of fun in our time with *Reflex*, but we're not sure how long the game will be able to hold our attention for. While touches like deformable terrain are implemented very well, they don't make a game by themselves and we have to question its staying power.

MX Vs ATV Reflex is being developed by Rainbow Studios. Check www.mxvsatv.com for more details.



ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY

Because doing flips off mountains is fun

OPEN WORLDS ARE in high fashion right now and you will, obviously, find one included in *Reflex*. Selecting any rider and vehicle, you can tear it up in a random piece of countryside, varying by whichever direction you head. It's a surprisingly hypnotic experience and while it clearly won't make up the bulk of the game, it's a welcome addition.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The game has a strange, hypnotic quality, which has got to be a good thing.
- Track deformation adds a tactical element to races.

- Enough bone-crunching crashes to get an "oof!" reaction.
- Online play could be a nice distraction from *Modern Warfare 2*.

READ ME

This is the third *MX Vs ATV* title from Rainbow Studios, and it's already been out in America for a couple of months now.

INTRODUCING...

WORLDS APART

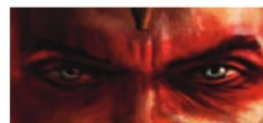
The lush greenery of a ruined Earth



WE'RE REALLY QUITE taken by the art style and scenery Ninja Theory is looking to create with *Enslaved*. This is a significant departure from how Bethesda viewed a post-world war planet in *Fallout 3* and we rather like it. There may well be a reason for this sudden natural uprising.

BEHIND THE EYES

The man behind the monkey, again

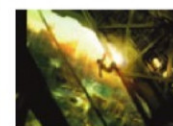


NINJA THEORY'S RELATIONSHIP with Andy Serkis, star of *Lord Of The Rings* and *King Kong*, is clearly still strong, as he has returned to mocap our hero in *Enslaved*. Some of the artwork we've seen shows Monkey hanging from walls and climbing about, so it's probably been quite demanding.

Kong, is clearly still strong, as he has returned to mocap our hero in *Enslaved*. Some of the artwork we've seen shows Monkey hanging from walls and climbing about, so it's probably been quite demanding.

ALL BY HIMSELF

Just wants to be all by himself



MONKEY IS APPARENTLY not the most sociable soul, but with most of humanity dead and buried we don't imagine that sparkling conversation is high on anyone's list of priorities. Monkey seems to be spending

much of his free time working out, which would explain those bulging muscles.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2010

Enslaved

A very different kind of co-op adventure

Ninja Theory is looking to apply its high ideals and cinematic eye once again with *Enslaved*, inspired by a popular Chinese tale and brought up to date with robots and a post-apocalyptic landscape. Only trouble is that this world actually looks kind of cool. Should we be seeking help when we start gazing enviously at ruined earth scenarios because they seem so beautiful? Don't answer that question.

As you may have read in these pages before, *Enslaved* is set after the devastation of two world wars with very little of the human race left standing and a herd of marauding robots scouring the Earth still seemingly following their pre-war orders. We smell a conspiracy behind those actions, but we'll have to rein in our predictions for the time being as Ninja Theory is keeping its mouth shut on specific story details.

What we know for sure is that the game is set in an as yet unnamed US

city that had been levelled and is now finding itself being reclaimed by nature. Plants and wildlife seem to be doing rather nicely out of all the destruction and chaos and we say good for them. They usually get a rather raw deal.

Anyway, the concept art alone has got us very interested in *Enslaved* and while *Heavenly Sword* may not have been the super-polished action adventure we were expecting, it still showed the potential Ninja Theory has if it's given the right project to express itself. This time it has the pressures of multiplatform development to handle rather than the pressure of console-exclusive expectation, but we think it has enough about it to make it through. *Enslaved* is looking like a project that is at least as ambitious as *Heavenly Sword* and we definitely want to see more.

Ninja Theory is developing *Enslaved* and while the game doesn't have a site yet, the developer does at www.ninjatheory.com.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Ninja Theory has some high-minded aspirations for what gaming can achieve.
- More motion-capture madness should ensure a wonderfully animated game.
- The story on which *Enslaved* is based is lots of fun and should translate well.
- There are lots of cool gameplay ideas being hinted at that we can't wait to see.

LADY IN RED

Ninja Theory still obsessing over redheads

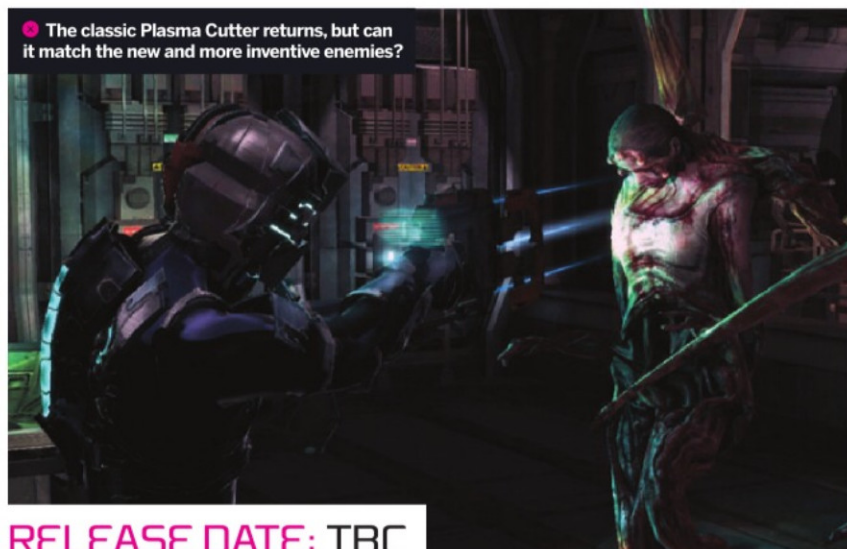


TRIP IS OUR female protagonist, although that may actually be antagonist as far as Monkey's concerned thanks to the headband she's forced on him. Trip is socially awkward rather than a loner and needs Monkey if she wants to survive. She's also a tech wiz and will help you out in that area.

PREVIEW



● The Sprawl is a much more varied location to explore with lots of civilian areas.



● The classic Plasma Cutter returns, but can it match the new and more inventive enemies?



● The Zero-G environments are getting bigger and offer midair control this time.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Dead Space 2

It's cold outside, there's no kind of atmosphere

Of the new IP EA has launched in the last couple of years one title stands out among them in terms of critical reception, sales and fan appreciation. *Dead Space* came upon us with little expectation from a studio with little reputation outside of EA and blew people away. Sure it was derivative (name a famous sci-fi or horror franchise in any media and chances are there's something of it in this game), but it was put together with such flair and attention to detail that we cared very little. As a result *Dead Space 2* is a hotly anticipated title.

Visceral Games established a brand for itself with *Dead Space* (it used to be called EA Redwood Shores) and it is approaching this sequel in typical blockbuster sequel fashion. *Dead Space 2* promises to be bigger, bolder, scarier and more engrossing than before. The key change is in the location, moving from the confined corridors and rooms of the USG Ishimura to the virtually

urban mass that is a space station called the Sprawl. If you've played *Dead Space: Extraction*, the Wii rail-shooter prequel, then this space station will ring a bell. *Extraction's* lead character Lexine Murdoch escapes there having survived the Aegis VII Necromorph epidemic that brought Isaac Clarke to the planet in the first place.

Three years on from those events and seemingly having survived the suggested attack at the end of *Dead Space* (we'll say no more about that in case of spoilers), Isaac has been called upon to handle a new Necromorph attack. The ultimate fate of Lex Murdoch is unclear, but clearly she didn't get as far away from her attackers as she thought and they've somehow resurfaced. As the only survivor of the Ishimura incident Clarke is the closest thing the Earth government has to a Necromorph expert. We're seeing some pretty clear similarities with James Cameron's *Aliens* with regards to these events, the

shift in location and the positioning of Clarke as a Ripley-styled reluctant hero. If you're going to make a bigger, bolder sequel you may as well learn from one of the best.

Visceral established a brand with *Dead Space* and it is approaching this sequel in typical blockbuster sequel fashion

Aliens really upped the action ante and *Dead Space 2* is promising to do the same. Isaac is being pitched as a much more active and aggressive character in this sequel, under orders to take the fight to the Necromorphs and having the firepower to do so. The Plasma Cutter returns and is as

effective as ever, but the addition of even more powerful guns and harder enemies should mean you don't rely on it quite as much. A Javelin gun for instance acts as a kind of harpoon that can pin enemies

to surfaces and hold them there. What you choose to do with them after that is presumably up to you. It almost seems a little unfair to start cutting them up in that position.

And then there are Zero-G environments. As if the prospect of having to navigate the Sprawl wasn't

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A much bigger playing area to explore and cause you gastric malfunctions.
- A wider variety of Necromorphs than before to keep you occupied.

- New weapons for fighting off the undead horrors and hopefully save your underwear.
- Lead character Isaac Clarke will finally be given a voice for more than screaming.



● You'll need to stay aware of your surroundings at all times with smarter Necromorphs.

scary enough, these environments are being promoted as 'epic' with the ability to control Clarke's movement in midair and attack between platforms. This was a unique element of the first game that went down really well and any expansion of it is likely to be a real draw. But then, that goes for most of what Visceral seems to be doing with *Dead Space 2*. Clearly the studio has a good idea of where it wants to take this series and as the universe expands it would seem we have a new triple-A franchise building before our eyes.

Visceral Games, the creator of the original game, is once again on development duties for *Dead Space 2*. You can find out more at deadspace.ea.com.

READ ME

Dead Space's protagonist Isaac Clarke may be a little insane. The effects of the Red Marker from the first game have been giving him all manner of strange hallucinations.



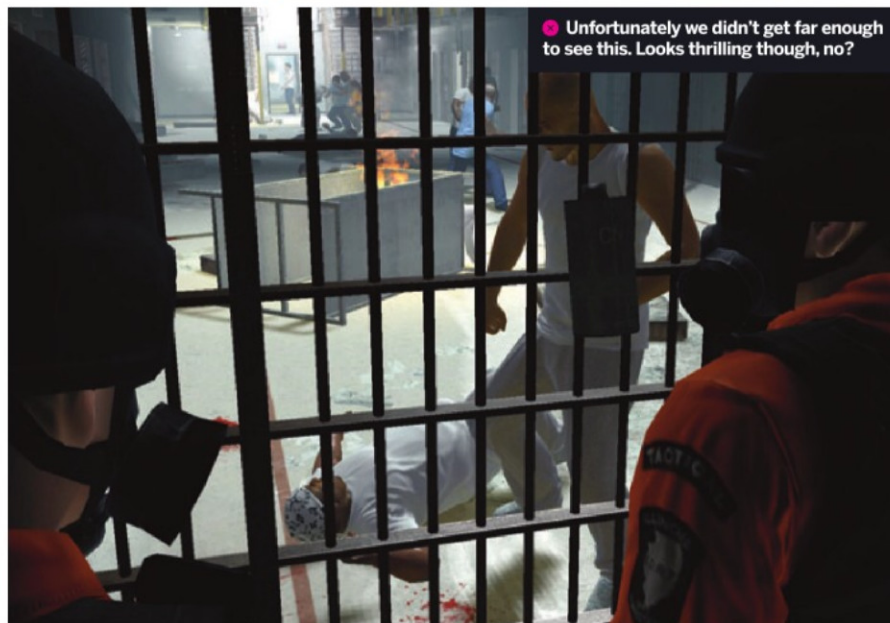
● The Church Of Unitology has a strong presence on the Sprawl it would seem.

BEAUTY AND BRAINS

The Necromorphs got themselves some learning

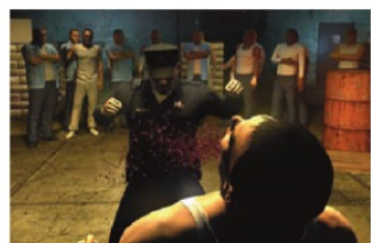
WHILE ISAAC CLARKE is packing some much meatier hardware in *Dead Space 2* he is also going up against more challenging enemies. The Necromorph infestation of the Sprawl grows as the game progresses and that means all sorts of different levels of infection and end results. One new enemy is apparently the Stalker, which works in packs and will try to lure you into traps by taking you into a dead end and then ambushing you. It works the other way too, though, as they'll track you too and fall into traps of your own making.

PREVIEW



FACE TO FACE

Going to town for authenticity



AS BRIEFLY MENTIONED in the main text, the *Prison Break* game has involvement from most of the main cast from the TV show. Each of the actors has lent their voice and likeness to the characters, giving that extra bit of authenticity that people crave so very much. Probably the most notable exception is Sarah Wayne Callies, the prison doctor.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Prison Break

Welcome to Prisneyland, Fish

Fans of *Prison Break* aren't in short supply – we even have some here in the office – so it makes perfect sense for the Fox TV show to be made into a game. We expected a standard, third-person stealth adventure game and that's what we've got. What we didn't expect was that the story would run parallel to that of the first series of the show, introducing a new character to be controlled by the player. Tom Paxton is an agent for ominous name merchants The Company, who has been purposefully installed in Fox River State Penitentiary to track Michael Scofield, protagonist of the TV show, and figure out why the law-abiding structural engineer committed an armed robbery and ended up in the clink.

We've no idea what most of that means, but fans are sure to love it. The angle ZootFly and Deep Silver are pushing is fairly interesting: the game is aimed at fans of the show, and as such isn't exactly made for your usual gamer. This means simple controls, a great deal

of helpful tutorials and a mix of stealth sections and quick-time events to keep everything welcoming enough for those who may not have played many games before. Stealth is aided by a radar map at the top of the screen, showing players where guards are and where they're looking. Stay out of their line of sight, basically. QTEs were a bit buggy, but it's clear they'll be a bit of basic interaction once fixed, and easy enough for the 'casual' player.

We were only able to play the early stages of the game, so it would be unfair to pass any real critical judgement on *Prison Break*. However, while we were promised the game opens up, all we saw was a basic, almost patronisingly simple foray into the world of prison escaping.

With the backing of the show's writer and most of the voice talent included there's no doubt this will be lapped up by the fans. Frankly, it's aimed right at them, so we're not complaining.

ZootFly is developing *Prison Break*. Check out www.zootfly.com, although the site currently has no details of the game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Fans of the TV series should like it.
- It looks simple enough for the target audience.
- It's an interesting take on a licensed title.
- Tom Paxton falls like a comedy god.

READ ME

There have been many famous prison breaks throughout history, but the greatest escapee of all time is clearly Richard B Riddick.



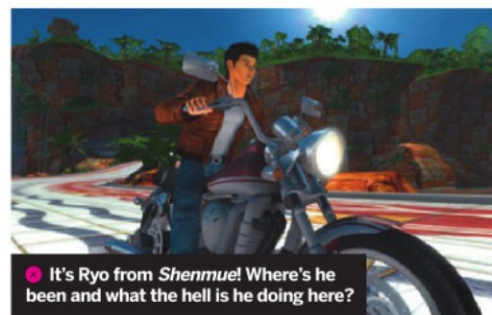
HANDS-ON



● Alex Kidd is fast becoming a staple of these Sega character mash-ups.



● It's Ryo from *Shenmue*! Where's he been and what the hell is he doing here?



RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2010

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing

Four wheels are better than two red shoes

Pulling off a karting game can be tricky. Many have tried and failed for various reasons. Sometimes it's because the physics are off, the weapons are imbalanced, the tracks lack imagination or there aren't enough interesting characters to choose from. Sega has tried to bring Sonic into the racing genre before with mixed success, but by adding in other Sega characters it may have found a winning formula at last.

We've had a couple of chances to play *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* now and what's stuck with us is that it ticks all the right boxes. All of the three tracks we've played have plenty of character, individual quirks and shortcuts. The character roster is strong and getting stronger. The only area that still needs some work is the racing physics and kart handling, which are acceptable, but could be tighter. Like karting games before it, *All-Stars Racing* is a game that leans heavily on its drifting speed boosts and these in particular could offer more precise player control.

That's something that will hopefully come out through playtesting, but at the minute the balancing already feels much better. Confirmed characters include Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Billy Hatcher, Amigo, AiAi, Alex Kidd and Ryo Hazuki from *Shenmue*. Each has their own game-leveling All-Star move when they fall back in the race, which can help them gain a stronger position. When we first played it these seemed to be handed out too freely, but that's changed. Now they appear only in the direst of circumstances, keeping the race tight and competitive.

The basics of strong track design, diverse roster and fun pick-ups is already there with *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing*, so all it needs now is those last few tweaks to make it a real contender. Having seen the improvements made thus far and having enjoyed our time with it anyway, this could be a welcome addition to *Sonic* fans' collections.

Sumo Digital is developing *All-Stars Racing*. For more details visit www.sega.co.uk/games/sonicracing.



SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

Offline multiplayer is *All-Stars*' home

A PLEASANT AND all-important addition to *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* is four-player split-screen multiplayer offline, which is where karting games are at their best. You can also go online and enjoy an eight-player battle, but we don't think that's the same. Your friends are easier to kick in frustration when they're sitting right next to you.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Good cast of *Sonic* and Sega favourites makes for some varied racing.
- Solid driving mechanics that keep races competitive, but can be mastered.
- Some fun tracks based on Sega's most popular gaming worlds.
- Ryo Hazuki's in it, which means there remains a slim chance of a *Shenmue III*.

READ ME

Zombie couple Zobio and Zobiko from *The House Of The Dead EX* are believed to be joining the cast. That would be a fun addition.



● Billy Hatcher's All-Star move is a rolling egg attack that shoots him up the grid.

GEARS OF WHA?

Because looks aren't everything



PEOPLE ARE QUICK to point out the similarities in look between *Quantum Theory* and *Gears Of War*. Massive, burly men with huge guns and chunky body armour: sounds about right. But that would be unfair to the rest of the game, which at least promises to bring something interesting to the table. We don't yet know if it will deliver on these promises, though.

A WOMAN'S TOUCH

Lower those testosterone levels



TECMO HAS BEEN keen to point out the art team working on *Quantum Theory* isn't just testosterone-loving men – half of the art department is female. We're not sure what difference this makes, as the game still looks a bit like a 14-year-old's wet dream, but we think they mean there's more to the artistic style than gritty, grey/brown, pumped-up blokes, which is shown through some concept art.

RELEASE DATE: SPRING 2010

Quantum Theory

Oh, so we're in an 'open relationship' now then?

The name will probably have changed another 30 times by the time this mag hits the shelves and format exclusivity may have been cast into the ether. Wait, scratch that – it *has* been cast into the ether, with the former PS3-exclusive now heading to 360, too. This is likely to bother our Microsoft-owning comrades more than us, though, as they already have *Gears Of War* on their console. To clarify: *Quantum Theory* looks a great deal like Epic's epic.

Anyway, enough about the console that we don't cover in this mag, and back to the matter at hand. *Quantum Theory* may have seen some changes recently, but the core game is the same, with players battling enemies in a living, moving tower, where the cover system employed by the player has to be as flexible as the environment they are in. One new thing we've been introduced to is a description of a mechanic we already knew about: when the female character, Filena, is hurled into enemies by Syd

it's a sort of super attack, which has been described as 'R-Type-esque'. The mere mention of the classic shoot-'em-up piqued our interest, if only briefly.

We're still yet to see much about *Quantum Theory* that fills us with glee, though there is some potential if everything comes together. However, the loss of platform-exclusivity has harmed our hopes for this one a little bit.

Team Tachyon is developing *Quantum Theory*. Check out www.tecmo.co.jp/product/qt for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Not everyone digs it, but it certainly has a powerful design aesthetic.
- ❑ Hopefully 'R-Type-esque' means hidden mini-games. Like *R-Type*.
- ❑ Platform exclusivity isn't the be-all and end-all. So there.
- ❑ The press haven't been nice to *Quantum Theory*, hopefully it can prove us wrong.

READ ME

Actual quantum theory is to do with things like black body radiation and gives insight into things like smell receptors. So not much like the game, really.

EXCLUSIVE SCHMEXCLUSIVE

It shouldn't bother us, but it does



SO WHY DO we have the strange feeling that *Quantum Theory* may be hurt by going multiplatform? Well, we simply feel that things developed on an exclusive basis turn out better – most of the time. Diluting the technology pool to accommodate other development architecture means there's less time to concentrate on getting the actual game right, as more is spent making it run on multiple platforms. And now you know.

SHMUP

Bydo inclusion not confirmed yet



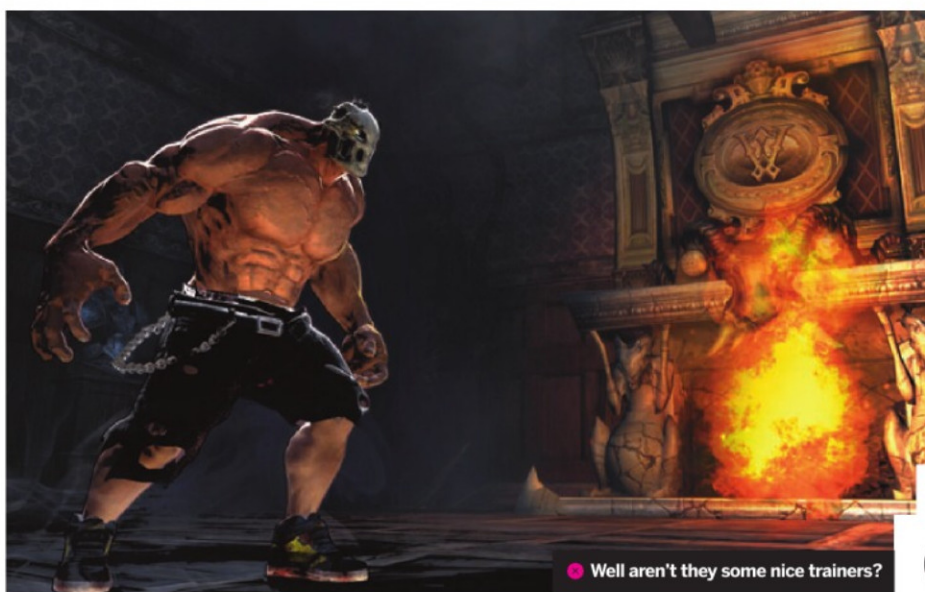
IT WAS CERTAINLY an interesting way of describing the AI-controlled partner, Filena, as 'R-Type-esque'. What the person saying that was getting at was that she acts like a superpowered battering ram, as did the Force on *R-Type*. Now it's been said, we can definitely see where the comparison is coming from. Though it still doesn't mean *Quantum Theory* is going to be a secret sequel to the classic shmup.

KEEP MOVING

Move to cover/cover to move



IT'S NOT INCREDIBLY harsh or even surprising to point out that *Quantum Theory* has little going for it with regards to original ideas – not that that's always a bad thing (hello, *Uncharted 2*). Moving cover is what most of the press material prattles on about, and while it's easy to dismiss as a gimmick, we have some hope this will end up bringing an interesting tactical element to the game.



● Well aren't they some nice trainers?



● The main character, Rick, has been updated to look... umm... 'cooler'.



● Never let it be said that this is a game for kids.

JIMMY SNUKA

Over, under, round and through



IN ONE OF the oddest merchandising tie-ins we've seen, Namco Bandai revealed the official *Splatterhouse* trainers, based on Globe's 'Superfly' model. We don't really get what trainers have to do with the game, but we'll go with it. Whereas some might decry this as a desperate play for attention, we're simply going to ask for a few free pairs. Size 12, cheers.



● While it doesn't look spectacular, there's definitely something about *Splatterhouse*.



● It would be a good idea to hit this thing. Quickly.

RELEASE DATE: SPRING

Splatterhouse

Entry number 53,276 in Re-makeageddon

There comes a point when you have to think publishers are relying solely on warm nostalgia for the games they make. *Splatterhouse* – the arcade game – wasn't that good even 22 years ago when it first hit Japanese arcades. So why a remake of the first game is being made at all confuses us – next they'll be telling us the 'classic' *Altered Beast* will be redone (first, it's rubbish, and second, we *know* it's already been redone, and the remake is rubbish, too).

But here we are, presented with *Splatterhouse* and its tumultuous development cycle which has seen developers dropped, rehired and the creative process continue, just under a different banner. But throughout all of this we've seen very little of the actual game, bar batches of screens not far removed from the very ones on these pages. It's also safe to say the movies released haven't filled us with that much anticipation either.

Players take control of Rick as he tries to rescue his girlfriend from the clutches of the evil Dr West. Oh, while smashing things in the face quite a lot and making them explode in showers of blood and gore. It's an adult game, though it doesn't look to be distinctly mature with it.

Until we've had an opportunity to really sit down and get to grips with Namco Bandai's *Splatterhouse* reboot, we can't comment confidently. There's every chance this modern iteration will turn out to be one of those games perfect for a half-hour bash when you have a hangover – it could even be another new entry into the *50 Cent: Blood On The Sand* Hall of Fame. However, it could well surprise us and be a blast to the bitter end. But right here, right now, there isn't much that we haven't seen before.

Splatterhouse is being developed by Namco Bandai Games. Check out www.splatterhouse.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Over-the-top violence can be funny.
- Keith Vaz will probably go mental at it.
- Nostalgia can be a powerful tool to make us part with our cash.
- It'll be nice to have an unpretentious splatter-'em-up on the go.

READ ME

The original *Splatterhouse* is an icon of the late-Eighties/early-Nineties. This version is a remake of the original game, all modernised and stuff.



● We can sense a dash of *God Of War* and a hint of *Arkham Asylum* here.

THE LATEST ON...

We take a look at a sudden raft of new game announcements in the wake of the VGAs



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM 2

Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive **Developer:** Rocksteady **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

AN EXAMPLE OF 'the least surprising surprise announcement of all time' came about with the surprise announcement of *Batman: Arkham Asylum 2* at the VGAs. The first game was a critical and commercial success, meaning we didn't just expect a sequel – we *knew* one would rear its head. In fact, the only surprise is that it's coming so soon, with only around a year between the first and second games. Nevertheless, we're looking forward to getting back into Arkham – though as the trailer and website allude to, this probably isn't the Arkham Island we're used to. Has the asylum moved to new, larger grounds? Or has someone simply moved the sign as part of a hilarious jape? And why is Harley Quinn still wearing the same outfit? We aim to get answers to these questions as soon as humanly possible.



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

Publisher: THQ **Developer:** Yuke's Media Creations **ETA:** May **Format:** PS3

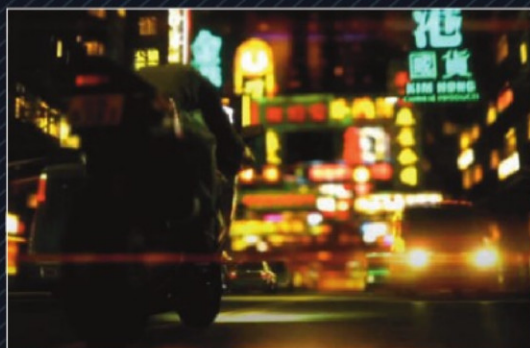
ANOTHER UNSURPRISING RETURN will be upon us in a few months, as the brawlers of UFC return to seriously addict us to their game once again. Last year's edition proved very popular and was a breath of fresh air for one-on-one fighters, and we can't wait to get stuck in with the likes of Chuck Liddell, Tito Ortiz and Kimbo Slice. There is a risk it won't be as impressive the second time around so we'll have to hope the developer doesn't rest on its laurels, as has seemed to be the case with THQ's *SmackDown* series of late.



MEDAL OF HONOR

Publisher: EA **Developer:** EALA/DICE **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

IT SEEMS A bit odd to claim the trailer for *Medal Of Hono(u)r* was a rip-off of *Modern Warfare 2*, as some immediately did after seeing it. Actual, real-life modern warfare seems to be the main inspiration for the reboot of the (at one time) classic EA series. Just with more beards. With development split between EALA for single-player and DICE for multiplayer we have high hopes for this one. While the *MOH* series may have dawdled along for a while under EALA, it was given a kick in the behind by 2007's *Airborne*, meaning there's potential. DICE's record with online shooters, however, speaks for itself – it has created some fine games in its time and with the experience of *Battlefield* under its belt it's easy to predict the new *Medal Of Hono(u)r* will offer some very strong competition for *MW2*'s online crown. It's already nabbed the beard crown.



TRUE CRIME

Publisher: Activision **Developer:** United Front **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

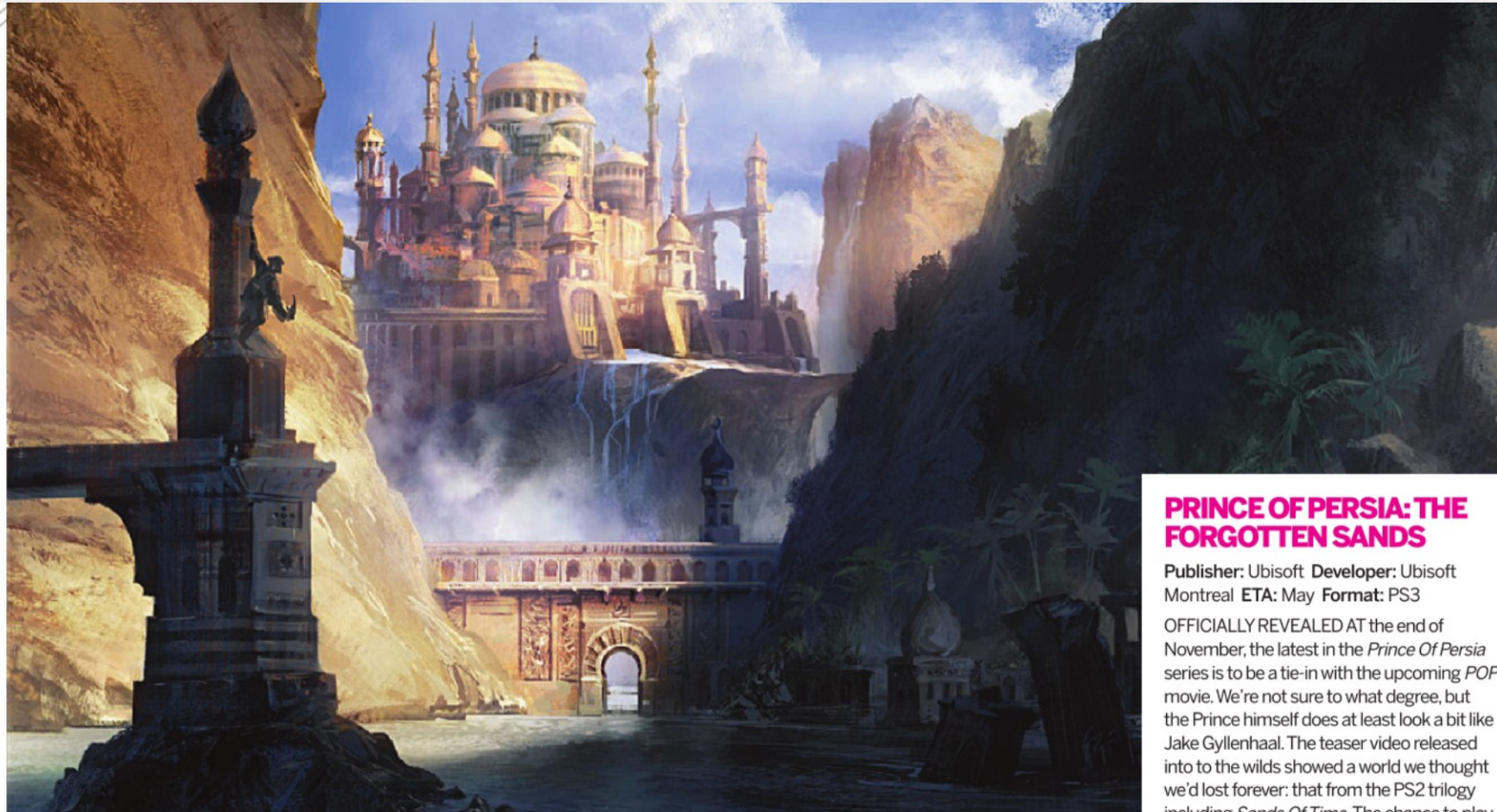
THE LAST *True Crime* game was released on PS2 in 2005 and was awarded 62% by *Play*. Which is why we're a bit confused they're making a new one – but hey, we're not going to argue with another vogue 'reboot' like everyone else seems to be doing.



DEADLIEST WARRIOR

Publisher: TBC **Developer:** Pipeworks Software **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PSN

DEADLIEST WARRIOR COULD be amazing: it's a download-only release, you can make a knight fight a ninja and the developer previously worked on *Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee*. In practice though? We shall see.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Montreal **ETA:** May **Format:** PS3

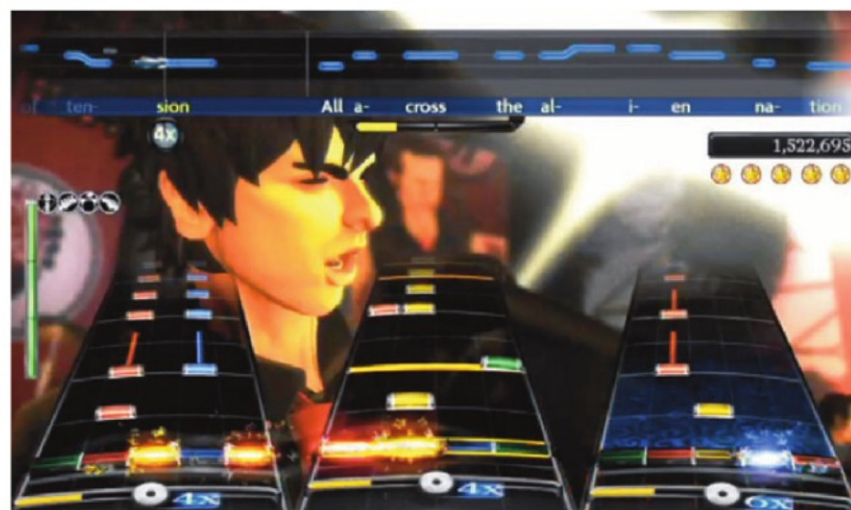
OFFICIALLY REVEALED AT the end of November, the latest in the *Prince Of Persia* series is to be a tie-in with the upcoming *POP* movie. We're not sure to what degree, but the Prince himself does at least look a bit like Jake Gyllenhaal. The teaser video released into the wilds showed a world we thought we'd lost forever: that from the PS2 trilogy including *Sands Of Time*. The chance to play through the events between *SOT* and *Warrior Within* should be a good one, as it's hopefully before the Prince started saying "bitch" a lot in that ridiculous 'badass' manner that took over from the second game. We haven't seen much, but what we do know is there will be rewinding and a lot of sand, though at the time of writing there's no word if Nolan North will be reprising his role in *yet another* game.



STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED 2

Publisher: LucasArts **Developer:** LucasArts **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

PROVING ONCE MORE that no one ever really dies comes *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 2* and the return of the once-dead (now apparently not) Secret Apprentice, Starkiller. How the ins and outs of this will work we'll surely find out in due course, but right now all we can do is speculate about how hard LucasArts will actually make Starkiller for the sequel. Frankly, the best thing about the original – which admittedly had its faults – was the feeling of power the player had when they crushed a dozen Stormtroopers with their mind. A simple expansion of that theme, resulting in something like a Star Destroyer pinball mini-game or a level comprised entirely of hurling Ewoks into the nearest Sarlacc pit (or even a level where you find the most creative way to dispatch of Salacious Crumb) would clearly be excellent options.



GREEN DAY: ROCK BAND

Publisher: MTV Games/EA **Developer:** Harmonix **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

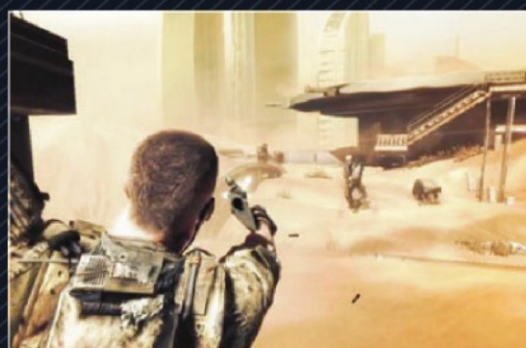
GOING FROM THE Beatles to Green Day may seem like a big step in a slightly odd direction for Harmonix, but it's going to make a lot of people happy – especially those who don't actually like the Fab Four and *do* actually like the Emo Three. No tracks have been confirmed at the time of writing, though assume the band's entire back catalogue should be up for grabs and you'll be on the right road. We'd hope for *2,000 Light Years Away*, *Redundant*, *Waiting*, *Nice Guys Finish Last* and *Desensitized*, to name but a few.



TRON: EVOLUTION

Publisher: Disney Interactive **Developer:** Propaganda Games **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

THE GAME OF the sequel to the movie that's based on games has been known about for a number of months, but now we have spiffy new imagery to go with it. Hopefully the game will include Jeff Bridges somewhere – we *need* a digital version of The Dude.



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Publisher: 2K Games **Developer:** YAGER **ETA:** TBC **Format:** PS3

ANOTHER GAME SET in the realms of contemporary combat. *Spec Ops* sees a return to a series that missed an entire generation of a Sony console. The original titles on PSone were pretty much terrible, though, so we really hope *The Line* isn't a direct continuation, or we're in trouble.

BEST OF 2009

CELEBRATING 2009 THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF TROPHIES THAT WE SHOULD HAVE GOT, BUT DIDN'T. BECAUSE THEY DON'T EXIST. BUT THEY SHOULD EXIST. BUT THEY DON'T. SO HERE THEY ARE...

Last year is so last year: 2009 is over, and it's time to look back at the highs of one of the best years PlayStation has ever seen. Rather than simply list our top-whatever games, we chose to look back at the year for the amazing moments; the things that made us go 'wow'; the bits that made us chuckle with glee; the bits that were just too good for us to ignore. How better to celebrate the greatest PlayStation moments of 2009 than by awarding Trophies – the things we all love so much. There is no better way.



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment Developer: Naughty Dog Released: October

Was there any question as to which game would pick up the coveted Platinum Trophy, denoting the game of the year? No, not really. October came and brought with it one of the finest games anyone had ever played: an action-packed, funny, blockbuster of a title that had honed itself to near-perfection. The initial ten hours we spent with Nathan Drake this year were some of the best we've ever had with any game, released on any system and for that Naughty Dog should be pleased its creation has earned our top honour for 2009. But what was it that pushed *Among Thieves* into these upper echelons? It was easy to agree on our favourite single moment from the game: the tank battle in the Cat and Mouse level, which saw Drake and Tenzin skittering between back alleys and behind cover to avoid the blasty gaze of a particularly angry tank. It's a prime example of a perfectly scripted moment in the game and one that has the very rare boon of feeling like you have more freedom than you actually do. While you are being led by the hand, you really don't care. But how could we talk about *Among Thieves* without mentioning the bit that made just about everyone grin like an idiot? We're talking, of course, about reaching the top of the Nepalese hotel in chapter six and simply spending a minute or two taking the whole

thing in. This was the point where many of us realised we were playing a true epic. Then there are the sprinkles – the little touches like Drake's journal, which has more effort and feeling put into it than many entire games had this year and is something many players might not even have noticed is there. Sure, you have to check it at points, but how many of you saw the page with Drake's ex-beaus and felt a twinge of sadness for the ol' rogue? Then, of course, there's the classic *Scooby Doo* reveal of the Yetis, and what it is that gives them their supernatural powers of being able to shrug off hundreds (and hundreds) of bullets. These are just a few, and we could probably dedicate the entire magazine to those moments in the game that just astonished us with how well they were crafted. However, that would be both stupid and a bit too gushing for our liking, so we've just stuck with this coverage and these moments.

But here's the real kicker: just picking a few moments from *Among Thieves* was very difficult. The entire game is a ten-hour moment of glory, with more hours of fun thrown in through multiplayer and the inevitable replays you're likely to take part in. Some argued shallowness, derived game mechanics and a B-movie story, but we can't help but feel they missed the point entirely. *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* is a stupendous amalgamation of styles from both film and gaming, and is deservedly our game of 2009.



GAMES OF THE YEAR

KEITH

1. Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
2. Assassin's Creed II
3. Batman: Arkham Asylum
4. Killzone 2
5. DJ Hero

JON

1. Assassin's Creed II
2. Brütal Legend
3. Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
4. Batman: Arkham Asylum
5. Skate 2

GAVIN

1. Brütal Legend
2. Modern Warfare 2
3. Peggle
4. Guitar Hero: Metallica
5. Killzone 2

IAN

1. Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
2. Borderlands
3. Batman: Arkham Asylum
4. Red Faction: Guerrilla
5. Dragon Age: Origins



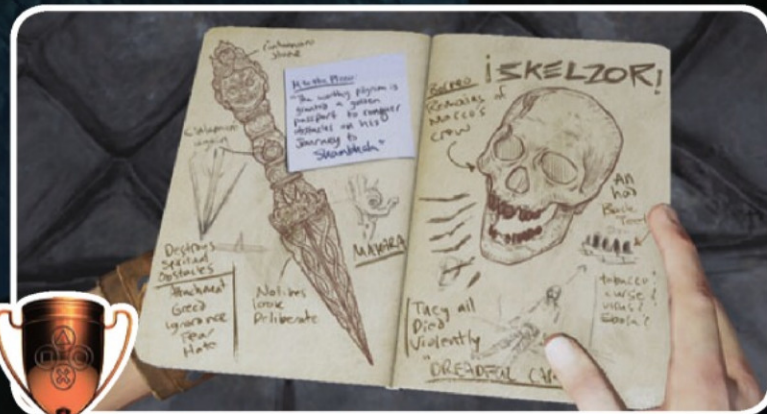
TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

You survived (and loved) the tank attack in Cat and Mouse.



TOP OF THE WORLD

You reached the top of the hotel in Nepal, and you took in that spectacular view.



DEM BONES

You took your time to read all the way through Drake's journal, paying particular attention to SKELZOR!



ZOINKS!

You discovered the secret of the Abominable Snow-yeti-men.

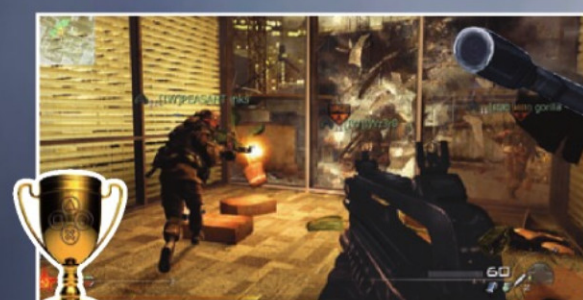
CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2

No Trophies in multiplayer? We'll see about that

Publisher: Activision Developer: Infinity Ward Released: November

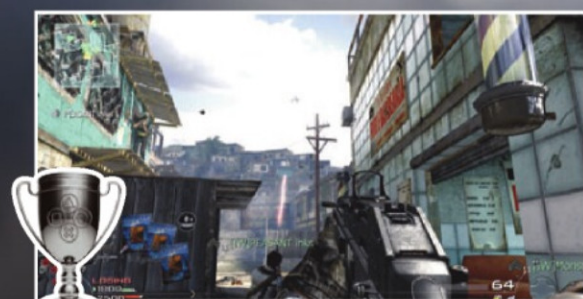
Our Gold Trophy is awarded for perhaps the most satisfying thing that can happen in any multiplayer game, especially *Modern Warfare 2*, and is an accomplishment that takes true dedication and skill. If you're playing so well that other players start accusing you of cheating, and you know full well that you're not, then you know that you have entered into the *Modern Warfare 2* elite in a way that mere stats, titles and emblems can't express. Of course, if you are accused of cheating, the correct thing to do is to smile smugly to yourself and not get drawn into a petty, trash-talking squabble, which brings us onto our next Trophy. People who argue with annoying people in lobbies are themselves annoying.

Don't be part of the problem – use the mute button. Next up, *Splashback!* is all about that rush you get when you're on such a roll that loads of different XP awards pop up at once. It feels great but can be so distracting and disorientating that it gets you killed. Finally we have something that *Play's* Gavin Mackenzie managed to do to himself by accident and was so upset that the game declined to recognise or reward his stupidity that he insisted it be included in this feature.



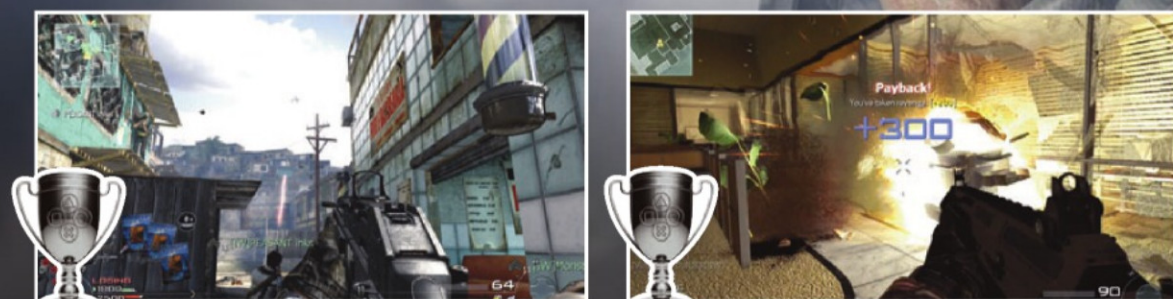
FAST LIKE CHEATER

You have been accused of cheating by an opponent in a multiplayer match, but you weren't.



A MUTE POINT

You have muted at least 50 per cent of the players in a multiplayer game lobby.



SPLASHBACK!

You have managed to trigger five Splashes in the space of ten seconds or less.



DROP DEAD

You have been killed by your own air-drop crate.

50 CENT: BLOOD ON THE SAND

Publisher: THQ Developer: Swordfish Studios Released: February

In the most underrated game of 2009, you can make Fiddy swear to increase your score multiplier, buy ruder words from an arms dealer or, like us, mash the swear button constantly for the game's entire six-hour duration while crying with laughter.



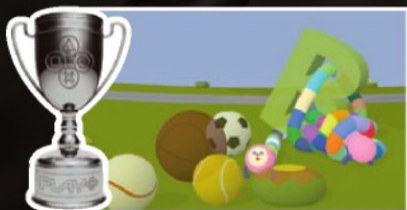
M*****R!

You have taunted your enemies 50 times in just one chapter. Bitch.

NOBY NOBY BOY

Publisher: Namco Bandai Developer: Namco Bandai Released: February

Noby Noby Boy doesn't have a sense of purpose like most games, so you have to come up with things to do of your own volition. We spent about half an hour trying to pull this off and got *nothing* in return when we managed it.



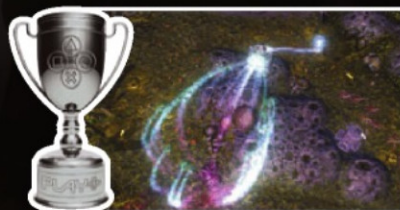
NOBY STILES

You projectile-pooed a soccer ball into the back of the net of a soccer goal.

SAVAGE MOON: WALDGEIST

Publisher: Sony Developer: FuzzyLogic Released: August

Savage Moon was a seriously hard game, but one member of the *Play* team managed to complete it. He went into the *Waldgeist* expansion pack brimming with confidence and still, five months later, cannot beat the first level. It's brutal.



ANTAGONIZER

You completed the first level of *Waldgeist* without copying someone else on YouTube.

CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

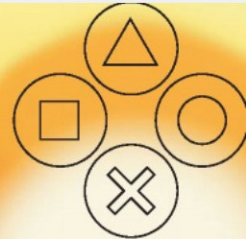
Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Techland Released: July

We weren't expecting much from Techland's Wild West FPS, but it impressed us with its originality, variety and capacity to tick pretty much every single box on the Western list. It even features a stagecoach ram raid. What more do you need?



RAM RAIDER

You managed to crash a stagecoach into a grocery store.



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

All we are saying is give PS3 a chance

Publisher: MTV Games **Developer:** Harmonix **Released:** September
The Beatles was less a game and more an interactive history of The Beatles, and that's why your dad took interest in it. First he talked over the entire opening movie, pointing out every little detail, like the boring Beatles know-it-all he is. And now he's commandeered your PS3 and is strutting around the living room cradling a plastic George Harrison Gretsch Duo, bobbing his head from side to side and announcing, "Now, this is real music" to anyone else foolish enough to enter the room. On the one hand, it's a nightmare. On the other, a welcome sign that games are gaining more and more mainstream acceptance.



NOTHING WRONG WITH MY EYE

You've spotted 50 references to The Beatles' music and history in the game's opening movie.



WHEN I'M 64-ISH

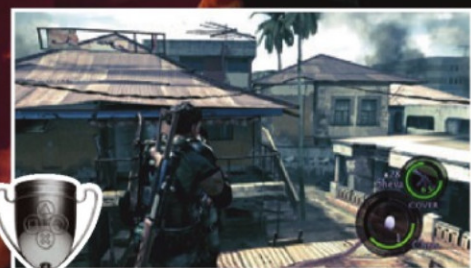
Your dad told you he was looking forward to "that Beatles game" he heard about on Radio 2 or somewhere like that.

RESIDENT EVIL 5

Got a bit scrambled in translation

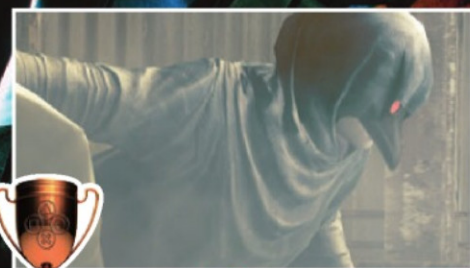
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Released: April

Resi 5 may not have been as scary and atmospheric as we'd hoped, but it still kept much of the series' charm and these two Trophies reflect this. The entire *Resident Evil* series is renowned for its moments of clumsily translated, bizarrely delivered dialogue and it was great to hear that, while *Resi 5* might have the slickest scripting and acting in the series yet, there's still at least one unintentionally hilarious line that you never tire of hearing. That line is "Gimme an egg!" Add to that a fan-serving reunion with *Resi* stalwart Jill Valentine, and you've got one of 2009's best nostalgia trips.



EGGSCHANGE RATE

Chris has requested an egg with a desperate urgency in his voice nine times in one minute or less.



BEST SERVED JILLED

You've had a difficult and emotional reunion with Jill Valentine, although you didn't recognise her at first.

GAME OF THE DECADE

It wasn't even close

AS THE PLAYSTATION'S first full decade drew to a close, the **Play** team started to think about what the PlayStation game of the decade ought to be and we didn't have to think for long. While we each have different personal favourites, when it came to objectively selecting one game to represent the Noughties, we were totally unanimous in our choice – *Half-Life 2*.

Valve's masterpiece was so far ahead of its time when it was released on the PC in 2004, that five years later its time still hasn't come. The PS3 *Orange Box* port may not have been as smooth as we'd have hoped, but *Half-Life 2* and its two subsequent episodes are still true benchmarks in game design that, in an industry plagued by an immature, focus-group led approach to product development, stand out as shining examples of what games can actually be, and what they can mean. More like this in the 2010s please.



RAG DOLL KUNG FU: FISTS OF PLASTIC

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Tarsier Studios **Released:** April

Only three people earned this Trophy. They are Chris Hughes, Anthony Hughes and Bob Holt – known collectively as Bamboodoo Studios. Exactly how they even did it we don't know, but you can see gaming's finest ever tribute to a dead pop star for yourself here... www.play-mag.co.uk/latest-playstation-news/michael-jackson-in-rag-doll-kung-fu.



PLASTIC SURGERY

You meticulously re-created the video to *Smooth Criminal* in tribute to the late, great, decidedly odd pop god Michael Jackson.

DJ HERO

Publisher: Activision **Developer:** FreeStyleGames **Released:** October



FREE SAMPLER

The samples and effects you triggered during a track actually sounded good.

NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

Publisher: EA **Developer:** Slightly Mad Studios **Released:** September



PAIN IN THE NECK

You've become totally immersed in helmet-cam mode, and flinched so hard when you crashed that you gave yourself whiplash in real life.

STREET FIGHTER IV

Publisher: Capcom **Developer:** Capcom **Released:** February



WELCOME INTERRUPTION

During Arcade mode, you got a special fuzzy feeling from the "Here comes a new challenger" message when interrupted by an online challenger for the first time.

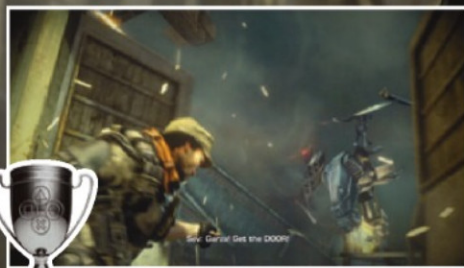
KILLZONE 2

More than just the best looking game ever

Publisher: Sony Developer: Guerrilla Games Released: February

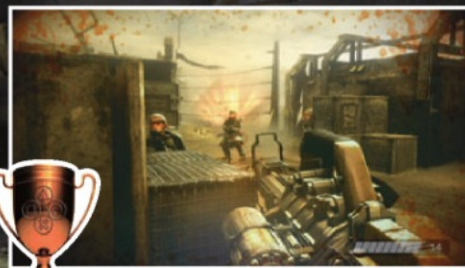
We always knew that, on paper, the PS3 was the most powerful games console the world had ever seen, but until *Killzone 2* came along, we hadn't seen any hard, unquestionable evidence of it. It boasted jaw-dropping graphical moments at almost every turn, but the one that gave us the biggest kick was the first time we saw the ball of flame from an explosion drift sideways and gradually disperse on the Tharsis Refinery mission. *Killzone 2* graphics were matched by its action, which never felt more desperate, more violent or more satisfying than during the assault on the Visari Palace courtyard.

Superb visuals, deafening audio, aggressive AI and cunning level design make this section feel more like a genuine struggle than anything we've played before. And the story's good, too. The parallels relating to wars over valuable resources buried under desert territory are a bit obvious, but there's a subtlety to the way the character's initial overconfidence slowly crumbles 'til the prevailing mood is one of desperation and hopelessness, best illustrated in the tense confrontation at Garza's coffin. The only bit we didn't like was that mid-game boss battle because we never found that tunnel.



TUNNEL VISION

You noticed that there is a tunnel to hide in during the boss battle against the ATAC, and so didn't get hugely frustrated at how unfair this fight seems when you stay on the rooftop the whole time.



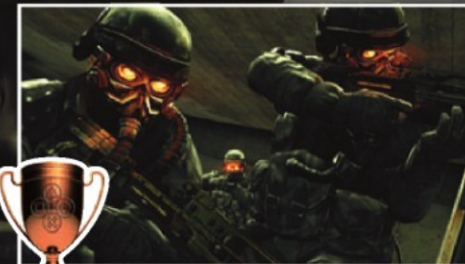
DEATH, WIND & FIRE

You were so overawed by the way explosions are affected by the strong winds on Helghan that you failed to notice a Helghast trooper sneaking around your flank and killing you.



SEV YOUR TEARS

You nearly cried even though you're a big, tough-guy, action-hero space soldier.



LAST STAND

You've pushed the Visari Palace guard all the way back through the palace's inner courtyard.

GUITAR HERO: METALLICA

Publisher: Activision Developer: Neversoft Released: May

Have a browse through the bonus videos on *Guitar Hero: Metallica* and you'll find one of Lars Ulrich recording motion capture for the song *The Shortest Straw*. It took several takes as it turns out he can't play it any more. Think you can do better?



DEAFENING PAINSTAKING RECKONING

You have completed *The Shortest Straw* on Expert+ difficulty.

BATTLEFIELD 1943

Publisher: EA Developer: DICE Released: July

One of the best downloadable games of the year and a great stopgap for fans eagerly awaiting *Bad Company 2*, some of them so hardcore that they actually understand how to control the planes properly.



DODO DOH!

You have somehow kept a plane in the air for one minute.

WORMS

Publisher: Team17 Developer: Team17 Released: April

We love *Worms*. We've loved it since 1994 and we love that it hasn't changed much since then. But we don't love some *Worms* players, we hate them. The ones who dig in, play defensively and hardly ever use weapons. We love beating them, though.



OPEN WARFARE

You have won ten online matches using only weapons.

WOLFENSTEIN

Publisher: Activision Developer: Raven Software Released: August



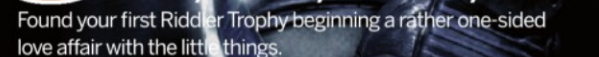
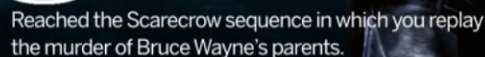
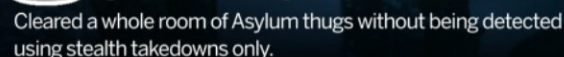
AXE'S POWERS

You hit an enemy with the axe over and over again until all his limbs and his head came off.

A journey to the heart of darkness

There was a lot of uncertainty surrounding *Batman: Arkham Asylum* prior to its release, probably born from the fact that on the whole *Batman* games have been pretty poor and its developer only had one PlayStation 2 game to its name beforehand. The final result, though, was a wonderful breath of fresh air proving yet again that a licensed product, when given the room to breathe and exist on its own terms, can be a triumph. *Arkham Asylum* had no movie to tie into and wasn't even based too heavily on a similarly named graphic novel. All it had to be was a great game.

The essence of Rocksteady's triumphs then were the strengths of the core gameplay mechanics, the pacing of your progression and the extra incidental details that became addictive features as you played on. The fluid combat really stood out, but over time it was the stealth takedowns that became most satisfying, tying in nicely with Batman's legacy. Likewise the psychedelic Scarecrow sequences were enjoyable for the way they broke up the repetition of corridors and mechanics. And ultimately we couldn't stop chasing Riddler challenges or Joker teeth. We're hoarders, what more can we say?



Without *Brütal Legend* Rocktober would just have been the month *Uncharted 2* came out, but thanks to Tim Schafer and Double Fine it was a month of metal celebrations and screams of 'Decapitation!'



Spontaneously found yourself throwing up 100 devil horn signs because the game was so metal.

It had been around five years since the last time the Ultimate Fighting Championship had graced a PlayStation and a lot had changed. *UFC 2009 Undisputed's* great controls and intense combat were a joy to behold.



Timed your kick to perfection as your mate went for a takedown and got a knee to the face instead, knocking them out.

OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE

Survived long enough using a single drone to take out all the guards in one sector. Just try not to think about where they came from.

HEAVY PETAL

Realised that you could actually destroy things such as fences and bits of wood using gusts of petals and then suddenly enjoyed playing the game.

DOE, RAY, EGON

Experienced a genuine flashback to your youth as the Ghostbusters charged up their proton packs for the first time. You can practically smell the popcorn.

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Probably the second best second coming

Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Released: November

As sequels go this is a fine example of how distillation, escalation and innovation need to be used and balanced to build on an original concept. Everything about this game oozes imagination and creativity as well as a pretty solid understanding of the most important force in gaming, having fun. *Assassin's Creed II* feels like a real sandbox at times despite its linear progression. Its cities are full of incidental details and tantalisingly attractive paths that simply must be run across. It's at these moments when you do things without being prompted to that *Assassin's Creed II* is at its best.

Giotto's Campanile in Florence is a great place to start this exploration of the game as it offers your first and greatest climbing challenge. There is already a Trophy for leaping from its summit, but the bell tower next to the Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore is a real puzzle at first. Figuring out how to climb it is a real thrill. Likewise mastering the art of the double kill by catching two guards unawares is something to savour. And then there's the accidental peril of having your hidden blades activated when a bard starts singing at you. We're not responsible for our actions.



THE ASCENT OF MAN

Climbed to the top of the Giotto's Campanile in Florence next to the Basilica of Santa Maria.



TWO FOR ONE OFFER

Stabbed two enemies in the eye simultaneously for the first time by sneaking up on them.



MUSIC CRITIC

Accidentally stabbed a bard who was annoying you because you forgot that your hidden blades were active.

INFAMOUS

Publisher: Sony Developer: Sucker Punch Released: May

Some people failed to see the brilliance of *inFamous* and it was perhaps that they didn't give it time to really see what Cole MacGrath was capable of later in the game. A fully powered up Cole was something to see.



CONGESTION CHARGE

Cleared an entire street in Empire City with maxed out electric power in one fell swoop.

BIONIC COMMANDO

Publisher: Capcom Developer: Grin Released: May

In the end it wasn't the greatest of years for *Bionic Commando* developer Grin, but at least it had one innovative and well-crafted game to its name. *Bionic Commando* had some of the best set pieces of 2009.



BUCKING BURAQS

Successfully rode from one end of the Buraq Armada to the other without falling off or dying in the attempt.

WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2010

Publisher: THQ Developer: Yuke's Released: October *SmackDown Vs Raw* has always had an appeal beyond hardcore wrestling fans among those that simply love to create and play around with characters as *SVR* affords. This year brought story creation, though, and the gloves came off.



TIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Created an original story sequence on *Smackdown Vs Raw*, uploaded it to YouTube and had it pulled down.

KATAMARI FOREVER

Publisher: Namco Bandai Developer: Namco Bandai Released: September



YOU HUM IT, I'LL PLAY IT

Got the main theme of *Katamari Forever* stuck in your head for an entire week, but rather enjoyed it really, which was quite handy all things considered.

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA II

Publisher: Tecmo Koei Developer: Team Ninja Released: October



FLOGGING A DEAD CORPSE

Reached a 50-hit combo hitting an already dead body, but had to count the hits yourself, because the game doesn't measure such things.



BORDERLANDS

Just like crack, it's very moreish

Publisher: 2K Games **Developer:** Gearbox Software **Released:** October

Borderlands was written off as not having any chance of doing well in the face of *Modern Warfare 2*'s might, but it managed to hold its own admirably. Aside from the absolutely compulsive nature of the game, meaning you will spend more time in the inventory screen debating whether one gun is better

than the other for a lot longer than is really healthy, the co-operative tilt to the game meant more than a few hilarious things can happen. Most notably: selling the uber-powered sniper rifle that your hunter co-op partner has been waiting hours to get his hands on. Bliss.



13 MINUTES AN HOUR

You've spent in excess of 13 minutes solid perusing your inventory, swapping your gear back and forth.



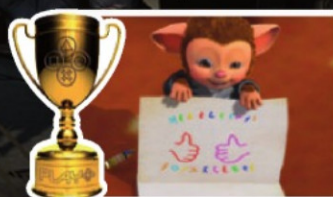
THERE'S ONE 'I' IN 'SELFISH'

You sold a gun in co-op with the full knowledge that a team-mate would have found it very useful indeed.

EYEPET

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** London Studio **Released:** October

EyePet's technology was undeniably impressive, and the game itself ideal for the young 'uns, but boys will be boys. Give the creature the ability to copy your drawings and a group of immature games writers will make the cute little beastie draw things he really shouldn't be drawing. Fact.

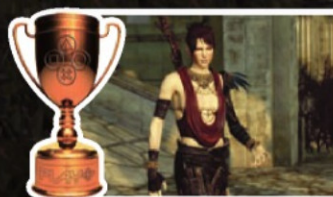


LATEST MEMBER

You have proudly joined the club of people to make your pet draw something naughty, you scamp.

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Publisher: EA **Developer:** BioWare **Released:** November



MONEY CAN'T BUY MY LOVE

You have given at least 25 gifts (including dog bones) to the wicked witch Morrigan and she still hasn't invited you to 'share her tent'.

RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

If in doubt, blow up an entire industrial complex

Publisher: THQ **Developer:** Volition, Inc. **Released:** June

The story was lame and the whole thing looked pretty boring but, like *Saints Row 2*, it was easy to ignore this and just muck about in *Red Faction: Guerrilla*. Simply driving around and destroying any building you could find made up many hours of

game time – not because it forced you, but because you wanted to do it. And how many times we stood still and admired the destruction we'd brought about in an area is quite surprising when we think about it. Even if falling girders are a bit of a hazard.



THE WHEELS ON THE BUS...

You have rammed a truck through every single building in the game, you tenacious little blighter.



PRIDE BEFORE THE FALL

While admiring your destructive handiwork, you didn't notice the falling masonry until it killed you.

TEKKEN 6

Publisher: Namco Bandai **Developer:** Namco Bandai **Released:** October

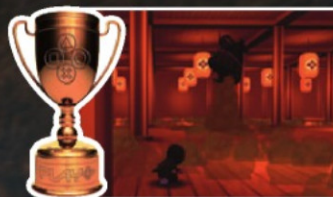


AZAHELL

You managed the near-impossible feat of defeating the final boss, Azazel, and to top it off you managed to do it using less than 300 continues.

MINI NINJAS

Publisher: Eidos Interactive **Developer:** IO Interactive **Released:** September



LAUGHING GAS

Your skills in defeating the farting samurai boss were hampered by the fact that you were giggling like an immature child (and the *Play* team), meaning you ended up dead.

THE SABOTEUR

Publisher: EA **Developer:** Pandemic Studios **Released:** December



PARDON MY FRENCH

You experienced Sean calling a Nazi a "motherless arseface knobjockey" and, if you have a soul, burst out laughing.

RE:PLAY



Our Star Letter writer this month wants to be scared. We suggest he try to read the Stupid Letter. If that doesn't scare him, we don't know what will



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
The Feared

Pretty much every letter we receive has to be trimmed down in order to fit on this page, not that we mind, but we do sometimes wonder why you lot don't just write shorter letters and emails. Presumably you're just a passionate bunch.

Not one of you can claim to be more passionate than this month's Stupid Letter Of The Month winner, though, whose letter needed to be trimmed of over 2,500 words. It's like the *War And Peace* of letters to **Play** only without Tolstoy's tedious and pedantic habit of putting full stops at the end of sentences.

CONTACT US

POST Play

Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

EMAIL
play@imagine-
publishing.co.uk

I Will Survive

This generation is very short of good horror titles – imagine a game based in Texas that plays a similar story to that of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Now hear me out.

The story begins with a video of you and four pals heading through the heart of Texas. I haven't decided what yet, but an event will take place, that ends with a car crash, and you're left stranded, on your own, with only a wrench. This is where you begin looking for your friends, searching houses, gas stations and fields as you try to discover what has happened to them. You meet people along the way, a dodgy sheriff and shop owners for example.

As you progress, more of Texas opens up, giving the game a free-roaming element, in which you travel through small towns to uncover the mystery. Day and night cycles are included, and the towns can be just as

strange and macabre as from the films. The atmosphere would be perfect, graphics realistic, and of course most importantly, gameplay would be similar to that of the *Resident Evil* games. Item slots, first-aid kits and the like. The only last decision to make is whether to base the killer on Leatherface or to create a killer purely for the game itself. Once completed, the game could even let you play as the killer to add length.

So, that's my idea. Hopefully you will agree with me that this could potentially be a very unique game. At the very least understand that for horror fans, this generation has been a little disappointing. **Arran Channell, Southampton**

On the one hand we agree that this generation has been disappointing for survival-horror fans, with *Dead Space*



Dead Space: A beacon of hope in a black void of not very scary games.

being about the only good, genuinely scary game on PS3. But we're not sure that your Texan horror is the solution to the problem. There's nothing scarier than the unknown and we think your game sounds too familiar. What's needed is more originality and less reliance on old ideas. At least you're trying, though.

Therapy?

I was pleased to see in issue 186 of **Play** that you're getting excited about the upcoming *DUST 514*. As a six-and-a-half-year veteran of *EVE Online* I've been waiting for any scrap of information about the game since developer CCP announced it late last year. Just a good shooter would have been enough to attract me but setting it in the *EVE* galaxy and knowing how the player-driven politics in the PC game can be so deep and engaging I can't wait to see that spill over into a persistent console game. I'm looking forward to encouraging my alliance in *EVE* to make the most of *DUST* mercenaries in our vendetta against the self-satisfied and complacent Northern Coalition,

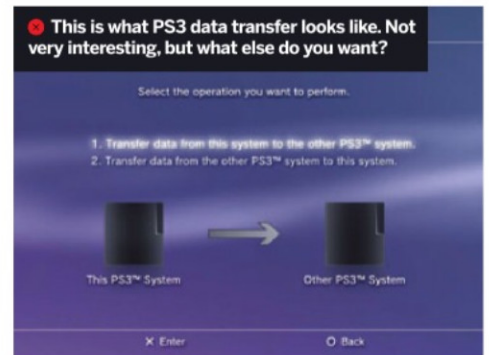
and likewise fully intend to play my part in *DUST* and encourage fellow players to foster friendships with, well, the right sort of *EVE* pilot if you know what I mean.

Andy Cairns

It's not often we hear from players of the most hardcore game on the planet. Did you obtain diplomatic clearance before contacting us? How do we know you're not a spy? *DUST 514* certainly is a fascinating idea, but we can't help feeling a little bit nervous about the idea of us console gamers being mere grunts under the command of you PC types. Don't let it go to your head, all right?

S.O.S. Save Our Saves

I have a 60GB PS3 that I've had from launch and I've recently bought myself a PS3 Slim as well. I'm a merchant seaman working two weeks on, two weeks off, so the PS3 Slim is for me to take on the ship, due to the fact it's a lot smaller and lighter to carry onboard and off again when my trip has finished. Please can you tell me if it's possible to take my game saves onto a new machine, I tried just copying straight to a USB stick and when I got onboard banged in the USB; some saves work, some do not. Please help, would it be possible to sign onto the PlayStation Network with my password and ID login from my 60GB PlayStation using my PS3 Slim and sync both



consoles on the same account? I'm away from my wife and two kids and would like to get some time on the PS3 when I'm knocked off. I need your help. It's so disheartening having to start a game again that you've worked so hard to complete.

Tyrone Sexton

You're not the only one, Tyrone. Many other PS3 gamers have upgraded to the Slim and find themselves in the same boat (pun intended... intended hard). But Sony has thrown a life belt (yep, that one, too) in the form of the new data transfer functionality that came with the optional firmware update 3.15. The function allows you to transfer all of your data from one PlayStation 3 to another via an Ethernet cable, deleting it all from the source machine when it's finished so as to prevent piracy (pun not intended this time... honest).

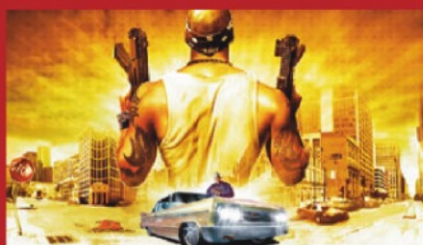


DUST 514: A mind-bogglingly ambitious fusion of PC MMO and console FPS.



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print gets a free game, courtesy of THQ. For each letter we used this month, the sender wins a copy of Darksiders, which is available now for PS3 (£49.99). Age verification is required.

STUPID letter



The sign on the left says all there is to say.

Saints Row 3 Idea

LOOK AND READ IT I THINK YOU MAY WELL LIKE IT!!! I WOULD LIKE IT IF THAT GAME HAVE IT!!! Yeah I agree with that should customise house, rooms, vehicles and other!!! When customise the house can select the colour too for the houses, rooms and other!!!

I want to play with gas PLEASE!!! I think that some people may don't like it to play with gas!! But I Would like to play with gas!! When using fuel make sure I can access it easily because I have and I like the games is 18 wheels of steels PC games!!! Watch out FUEL and that games have it play with gas, control the flashlight and other that good and I really like it!! So if that person don't want to play with gas and other want so better before game start select option if you want to play with gas?? YES OR NO If yes then it will run out the fuel have to go to gas station and get more fuel!! and if run out of fuel then call TOW TRCK and tow the vehicle bring to gas station and get more fuel!! If select NO then it same as SR1 and SR2 play driver forever and never need to stop and get more fuel!! I want to play with flashlight too PLEASE!! same as before game start select if want to play with flashlight?? YES OR NO, Do you want to play with animals?? YES OR NO, If you want to play with pets?? YES OR NO and too I want to play pay toll too PLEASE!! Want to play with pay Toll...

Brendan Daly, via email

This is just a very small fraction of a truly incredible email that goes on in pretty much exactly the same vein for over 3,000 words. We almost gave it the Star Letter, but then we didn't. If you really want to experience the whole thing then go to www.play-mag.co.uk/opinion/saints-alive.

If it's not there any more, we've taken it down due to too many people getting migraines, seizures and nosebleeds from trying to read it.

F.A.Q.

I say, bring on the demos.

Jonathan Kelly, via email

We say, bring on the demons. Ooh, scary.

Everyone knows that Polyphony Digital will never let us down when it comes to videogames.

Tre Davy-Cooper, via email

Unless you count videogames' release dates perhaps.

DLC should not mean that publishers can split their games up into chunks and then sell the full game incomplete and get you to buy the rest.

David Fletcher, Shepshed

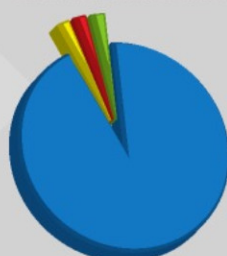
No, it shouldn't, and the only way to stop it is to avoid those games and avoid that DLC.

Bloody hell. Just finished *Uncharted 2* and can safely say in 40-odd years it's the best game I've ever played. Can't say I've ever said that before! Just thought I'd tell someone!

Neil Dethridge, via email

So you neglected to ever say that the best game you ever played before you played *Uncharted 2* was the best game you'd ever played? Bit harsh.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



- Saints Row 3 97%
- Demos 1%
- Oh, the horror, the horror 1%
- Uncharted 2 1%

PLAY
GOPLAY
the forum...



The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum

The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine

FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.

Join the discussion at www.play-mag.co.uk

SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: Burning Issues – They're Hot

Okay, now that I've listened to the podcast, I just realised that you guys are strange.

rbl007

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Headlines

How about big glowy stick thing that sorta looks like a Wii but with a big glowy thing on the end? Or is that name just a bit too long?

kev schmit

SUBJECT: MOVIES, MUSIC AND TELEVISION

Topic: What TV shows aren't as good as they used to be?

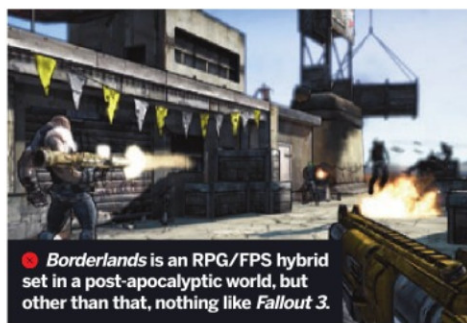
I woke up in biology today drooling. Not a good habit.

Mr healey

Highest Form Of Flattery

I just want to say that I dislike any gamer I know personally or anyone who does NOT know of games. I went round my friend's the other day because he recently bought the excellent *Borderlands*. I was amazed to find out that he had sold it a day later after playing it for two hours. His reason: it was a copy of *Fallout 3*... Can I just make this clear, *Borderlands* is NOT anything even near what *Fallout 3* is. This is not the first time people have disappointed me with this. My brother sold my copy of *inFamous* to buy *Prototype* saying that *inFamous* was a rip-off of *Prototype*. NO! The worst time was when I was playing *Wolfenstein* and I suddenly hear that *COD 5*'s zombies invented the zombie Nazi theme. And when I tried to explain that *Wolfenstein* was the inventor of the craze all I get is a load of deaf ears from people who think they know everything because they preordered *COD 5*. Sometimes, though, games do copy but they too can be good, just look at *Uncharted 1 & 2*. Amazing games, which copied several other people: *Tomb Raider*, *Indiana Jones*, *Gears Of War*, it's all there but it's done so well. I hope you agree that gamers that start gaming without knowing about old games SHOULD NOT TALK ABOUT GAMES!

Julian Graham, via email



Borderlands is an RPG/FPS hybrid set in a post-apocalyptic world, but other than that, nothing like *Fallout 3*.

Yeah, just because a game is similar in some ways to another game, doesn't make it a rip-off of it. There are loads of really good, but totally unoriginal games – *Killzone 2*, *Modern Warfare 2*, *Saints Row 2* and *Darksiders* for example. They all bring little to the table that's truly new, but they all do what they do really well. We wouldn't get too wound up about it though. Here at Play we know more about games than almost anybody and hear people spouting all kinds of ill-informed crap on a regular basis, especially in games shops. You've just got to be zen about it, though. Just ignore it and transcend it otherwise you'll fly into a massive caps lock rage and do yourself a mischief.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



1 'Early 2010' – the busiest first quarter for games ever, but is it all it's cracked up to be?

2 What genres do you feel have suffered during this generation?

3 Are you sick and tired of the sound of Nolan North's voice?

REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



Darran Jones

Reviewed: *God Of War Collection*

Darran has swine flu. At least he has all the symptoms, presumably including imminent death, and some Tamiflu. Of course, it might be some other kind of imminent death, but if we were you we wouldn't risk touching this bit of the page. In fact, don't even look at it.

Seriously, stop reading. This bit isn't for reading, it's for filling up the space. Why are you still reading it? Do you want to die?

currently playing: *Call Of Duty: Classic*

on review



74 God Of War Collection ps3

The God of high-def?



76 Darksiders ps3

War shows his dark side



72 Army Of Two: The 40th Day ps3

Does life begin at 40?

the rest



78 Dark Void ps3

80 Rogue Warrior ps3

81 Tony Hawk: Ride ps3

82 Ghostbusters pSP

83 Where The Wild Things Are ps3



**Luke Albigés****Reviewed:** *Dark Void*

Luke still hasn't found a singer for his band. He almost recruited an unknown local talent, Gavarotti, but couldn't afford his fee of £30 (three tenners), having spent all of his money on beard shampoo, leaving just £8.67 to last him the month. Meanwhile, Gavarotti has submitted a song to the FA that he hopes might be used as England's official World Cup song. It's called 'Dave Dave Dave'.

currently playing: *Borderlands***Gavin Mackenzie****Reviewed:** *Army Of Two: The 40th Day*

Gav has many of his most interesting experiences while waiting for his bus to work. This is because he lives in Boscombe, an area of Bournemouth full of characters. Recently he's had a group of homeless people singing *Don't Stop Me Now* and some chavs asking where McDonald's was having just walked past it. Maybe the fast food chain's refurbishment wasn't such a good idea.

currently playing: *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2***Ian Dransfield****Reviewed:** *Rogue Warrior; Ghostbusters*

Ian's taken a lot of cold showers this month, not because he misses his long-distance girlfriend that much, although he does miss her, but because his boiler is rubbish. Fortunately, Ian is northern and hardy and virtually immune to freezing temperatures. When it snows he strips naked and runs outside screaming, "C'mon then y'southern wimps. S'only a bit o' snow. S'not the end 't world."

currently playing: *Dragon Age: Origins*

JAPANESE IMPORT

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW (JAPAN)

Final Fantasy XIII

Just the Sum of its Parts

**DETAILS**

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Square Enix
Price
¥8,250 (£55 approx)
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Supports
720p, 1080i, 1080p
DualShock3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
Cero B (12+)
Website
www.square-enix.co.jp/fabula/ff13/

We remember the first time we had doubts that *Final Fantasy XIII* was not going to live up to its heritage. Speaking with a Square Enix artist who was proudly showing off her portfolio, we asked her if she was just as proud of her work on *FFXIII*. "Of course," she said. So we asked what she'd been working on that day. She paused, "A rock. I've been working on a single rock that appears in only one scene, for three seconds, for the past three days."

Before we could ask whether this was standard operating procedure, another Square Enix employee chimed in, "That's how that team works, everybody spends a lot of their days polishing rocks."

This is what *Final Fantasy XIII*, as a whole, feels like – a bunch of highly polished rocks. Individual aspects of the game are as deep and finely tuned as any other JRPG. However, without an equally refined structure to frame those deep mechanics, the game collapses into a very sharp and precise pile of rubble.

The game's story highlights this problem. While individual aspects work well and give motivation to keep playing,

other aspects fall flat. The heroes of the story, from the serious protagonist, Lightning, to the loveable yet dumb male lead, Snow, are entertaining to watch and to play as. At the same time, the game fails to provide worthy foils for these characters. The enemies are unsuccessful in invoking any of the strong emotions that previous antagonists in the *Final Fantasy* canon, like Kefka or Sephiroth, have.

The one area of the game that does not suffer from this unfortunate dichotomy

Final Fantasy XIII, as a whole, feels like a bunch of highly polished rocks

is the combat system, which builds upon the work laid down in more recent entries to the series. At the heart of this system is the familiar-sounding active time battle (ATB). The ATB system has played a role in every main line *Final Fantasy* game since the fourth instalment, save *Final Fantasy X*. However, the familiar name belies a radical departure from the traditions of the series.

Each character has an ATB meter that fills with time. It is divided into a number of sections depending on how far that character has levelled up. Players queue ➤

REVIEW



The playable characters are charismatic and well-rounded.

up actions before the meter is full, and each action will require a certain number of full ATB sections to carry out. For example, attack and simple magic spells like Cure cost one section, whereas more powerful spells like Esuna or Raise require two or more sections. The power of magic is balanced out by its ATB cost. There is no MP to worry about.

The game's battle mechanics are heavily influenced by *Final Fantasy XII* and *Final Fantasy X-2*. Similar to *FFXII*, players only control one character at a time. However, instead of manually programming party member AI, players can select the partner's class or 'optima' (to be called 'paradigm' in the English localised versions) in the middle of a fight. The player character's optima can also be changed on the fly. This changing of class mid-battle, as well as the fast-paced nature of the combat, is borrowed directly from *FFX-2*.

Switching optima takes only a few seconds and success in battle depends on optima changing in order to keep enemies under a constant assault of attacks. By switching optima and attacking in turn (as opposed to simultaneously) with AI party members, it's possible to combo attacks and even air juggle enemies. The higher the combo, the more the 'break' meter on the targeted enemy will rise. Once the meter



The time-based ATB meter replaces the MP of old.



It wouldn't be *Final Fantasy* without some impressively silly outfits.

is filled, the enemy 'breaks' and will take extra damage for a period of time. Certain enemies will also change their appearance, attacks and behaviours once broken.

Once the battle is over, the player's performance in battle is rated from one to five stars. This feedback is essential, because after the first few hours of the game, unless the player has learned how to get five stars consistently, the 'game over' screen will become an unwelcome and common sight. Thankfully, players are no longer deposited back at their last save when they die. Instead, they find themselves where they were just before the battle. Even after losing a boss fight, the game offers access to the character customisation screens before tackling it again. Combined with the fact that player health is restored after every battle, this may give the impression that the game is easy. However, *Final Fantasy XIII* uses its kindness in these areas to buy patience from the player in order to punish them severely at the first misstep in battle.

It's a trade-off that should satisfy those who enjoy more challenging games without frustrating those who loathe treading through the same territory again and again, only to fail.

The places the characters of *FFXIII* inhabit are merely contrived, linear Skinner Boxes for players to navigate

GOT A LICENCE FOR THAT?

The not-real-in-the-slightest driving simulator



AS CHARACTERS BATTLE with their Eidolons alongside, the 'drive' meter fills up. Each character's Eidolon can transform and enter 'drive' mode, where they can be directly controlled. The higher the drive meter, the longer the player can stay in this mode. While some summons turn



into drivable vehicles, like Snow's Shiva Sister motorcycle or Sazh's Brynhildr race car, there are a few more exotic transformations. We don't want to spoil them all for you, but don't be surprised if you find yourself 'driving' horses, mechs, or even castles.





command the Eidolon and its driver to attack the enemy for a short period of time.

In previous *Final Fantasy* games, the summoned monsters and their over-the-top animations displayed the best visuals of each game. That's not quite true in *FFXIII*. While the summons do look amazing, the art design and animation is so detailed and intricate that, for once, summons will probably be overlooked in forum discussions about the best eye candy in the game. Everything, from the way the characters animate to their intricate costumes, is a joy to behold.

Ironically, it's the same attention to detail in the game's environments that works to its detriment. Each area features exquisitely detailed architecture and structural design. However, this fidelity just highlights the fact that the places the characters of *FFXIII* inhabit are merely contrived, linear Skinner Boxes for players to navigate. At one point, two of the main characters visit a theme park. It's obvious that each shrub and wall has been designed with great care, but it doesn't feel like a real place. Playing the game is like navigating characters through a movie set – the store fronts and street signs are all

there, but there's nothing behind them. When contrasted with the Gold Saucer theme park from *FFVII*, with its mini-games, the area feels even more flat and lifeless.

Ultimately, the rest of the game suffers from similar problems. The characters are engaging and interesting, but the scenarios they're placed in fail to engage the player. The environments are beautiful and detailed, but this art feels like little more than wallpaper thrown over a tunnel that players walk through. It's clear that Square Enix has some of the most talented artists and designers in the industry. Where this game stumbles, was in taking the talents of these people and synthesising them into a single whole that's greater than the sum of its parts.

Ryan Winterhalter

VERDICT

A game that never comes together properly. However, some aspects of the game and its battle system are so good that it's still engaging and fun to play... most of the time.

79%

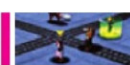
WAKARIMASU KA?

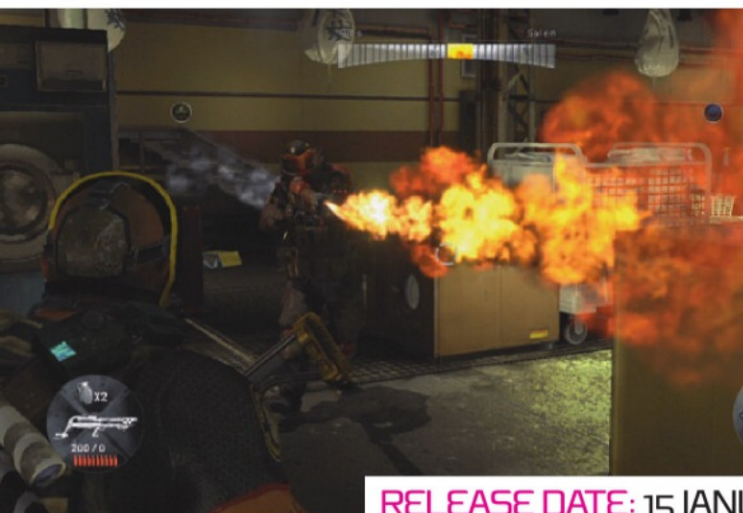
Is your Japanese up to it?



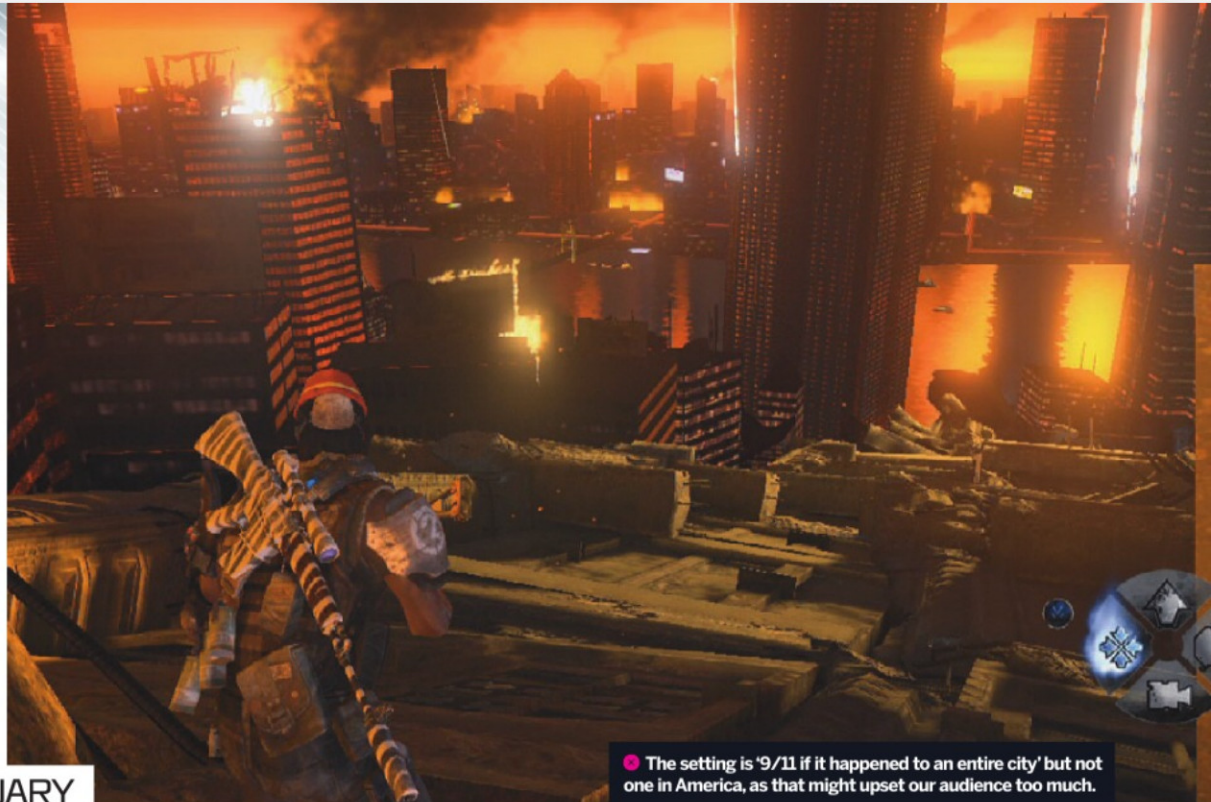
SOME JAPANESE ABILITY is required to play *Final Fantasy XIII*. The battle UI is written entirely in Japanese, and while it is theoretically possible to learn the commands of the game through trial and error each time a new mechanic is introduced, the three-month wait for the localised version would be far less tedious and infuriating.

The game should be far more playable for those with some Japanese experience. However, only those with extensive time spent studying the language will be able to read the tutorials and fully comprehend the cut-scenes. If you have three years of uni level Japanese, or are about level two on the Japanese Language Proficiency Tests, the game shouldn't be too hard.





RELEASE DATE: 15 JANUARY



The setting is '9/11 if it happened to an entire city' but not one in America, as that might upset our audience too much.



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
EA Montreal
Price
£49.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Third-person shooter
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.armyoftwo.com

Army Of Two: The 40th Day

Turns out two is also a crowd sometimes

When the closest point of reference for a game, other than its own forebear, is a game starring 50 Cent, and it fails to measure up even to that, you know you're onto a bad thing. But seriously, all we could think while playing *Army Of Two: The 40th Day* was that it was like *50 Cent: Blood On The Sand*, but with none of the charm and little of the fun. *Blood On The Sand* may have been pretty generic and ordinary in many respects, but the action was well-paced and the ridiculous story delivered with enough of a knowing wink, that it actually felt refreshing in an era dominated by games smothered by pointless gimmicks and futile attempts to be 'adult' and 'gritty'. As it happens, *Army Of Two: The 40th Day* is just one of those games – a

prime example in fact. It left us feeling first, quite bored, and second, totally confused as to exactly what EA Montreal thought it was trying to do.

Most of *Army Of Two's* gimmicks tie into the co-operative theme, but rather than enhancing that experience, they serve only to dumb it down, making it feel hamstrung by its own clumsy efforts to make it clear, in words of no more than one syllable, that this is a game about two people working together. Rather than present you with a range of tightly designed, truly varied scenarios that require you to figure out for yourselves how best to co-operate – in the way that the brilliant Spec Ops mode does in *Modern Warfare 2* – *The 40th Day* just gives you one long un inventive shooting gallery that, in itself, doesn't require two people at all, then litters it with things that two people either can or have to do together in order to trick you into thinking it does.

For example, there's a disproportionate number of doors that need two people to open them for no apparent reason. Does this serve to make you feel like you're working as a team? No, it just slows things up unnecessarily. Then there are the shields. One player can pick up a shield and the other can latch on behind him. A fun novelty the first time, but it soon dawns on you that each of you is actually able to do less when using a shield and that you'd be having more fun and making faster progress without it. The Aggro system is occasionally more useful, but it's far

from the clever, tactical mechanic EA would like you to believe it is. It's less about making you act smart and more about making the enemy AI act really dumb. It works by causing enemies to focus their attention on the player who's being the more aggressive. That's logical enough, but it's effective to the point that if one player attacks furiously enough to swing the Aggro meter all the way over to his side, enemies will totally forget that the other player exists and ignore him even if he's right in front of them. On one occasion we

One long, un inventive shooting gallery that doesn't require two people at all

went right up to an enemy and hit the melee button. Our melee attack missed again and again (which is a very annoying, but entirely separate issue, by the way) until eventually he just took us down. This being *Army Of Two*, though, we didn't die, rather we just lay at his feet still able to move and attack in a limited capacity. However, because all our melee attacks had missed, we had caused no Aggro and the meter was all the way up our partner's end. This meant that, rather than doing the sensible thing and finishing us off, the enemy standing over us turned his attention to our partner, leaving us to shoot him in the side of the head from almost point-blank range. We can't think of a word to accurately describe this enemy's behaviour... well, we can think of several actually, but they're all very politically incorrect. Unless an opportunity to exploit the idiotic AI in this kind

SPOILT CHILD

No really, this is a spoiler

THE MORAL DILEMMAS are all very poorly judged and, rather than leaving you thinking about morality, leave you thinking about what a stupid game you've found yourself playing. In this example, a small boy offers to grab a sniper rifle from under a seat for you. If you agree to

let him do it, you get the sniper rifle, but the boy gets shot dead in his attempt to retrieve it. It's not even about morality, it's about calculated risk, except there is no calculation because his death is entirely scripted, so you don't actually feel responsible in the slightest.

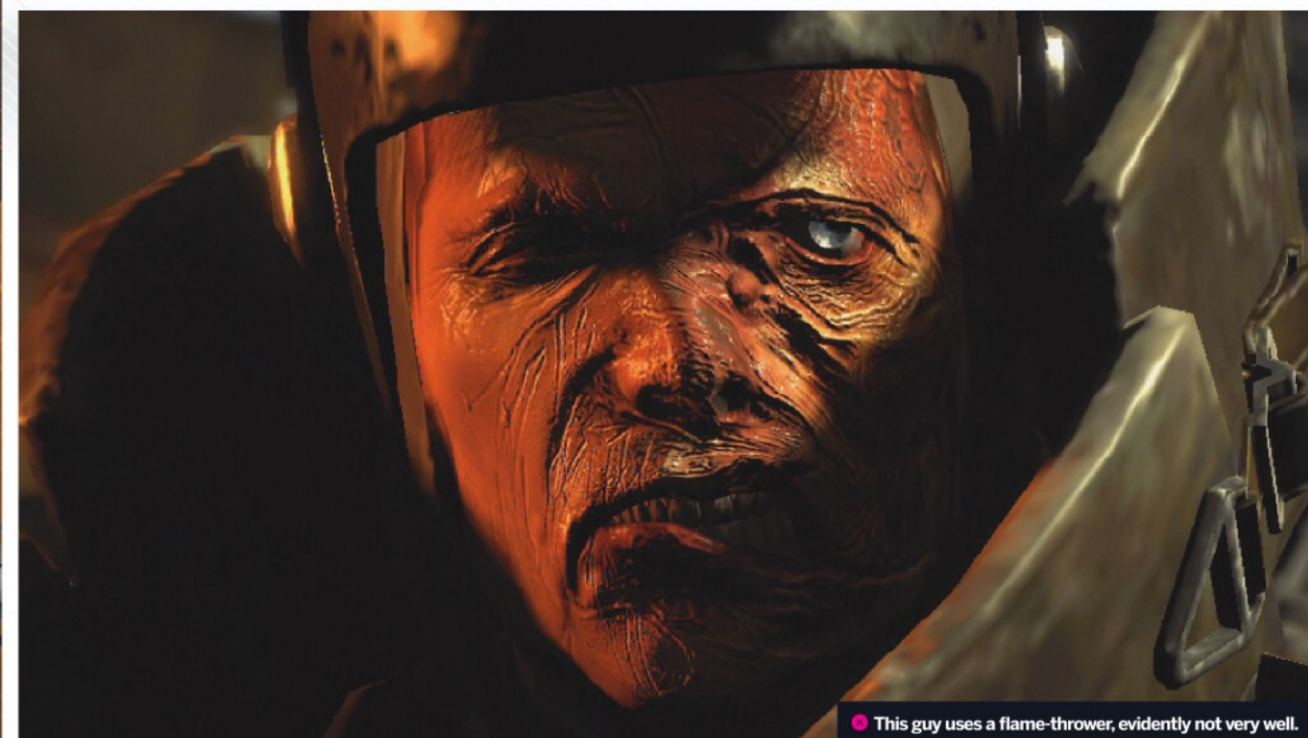


Or you
could try

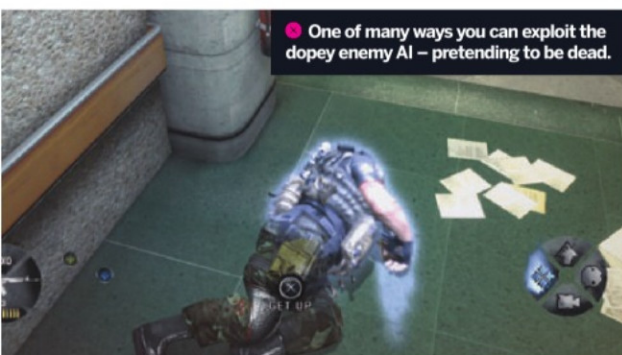
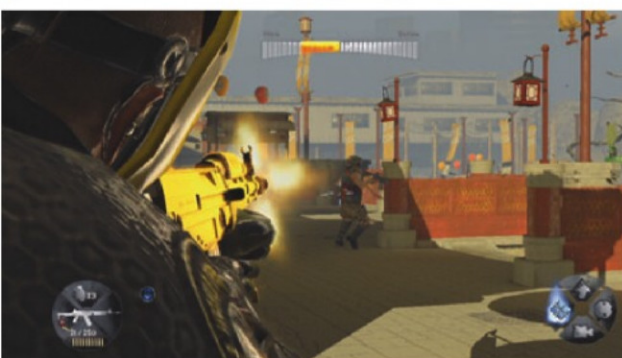


50 Cent: Blood On The Sand Issue 177
Contrary to expectation, 50 Cent's second game was actually quite good, in a pretty silly, generic kind of a way. **70%**

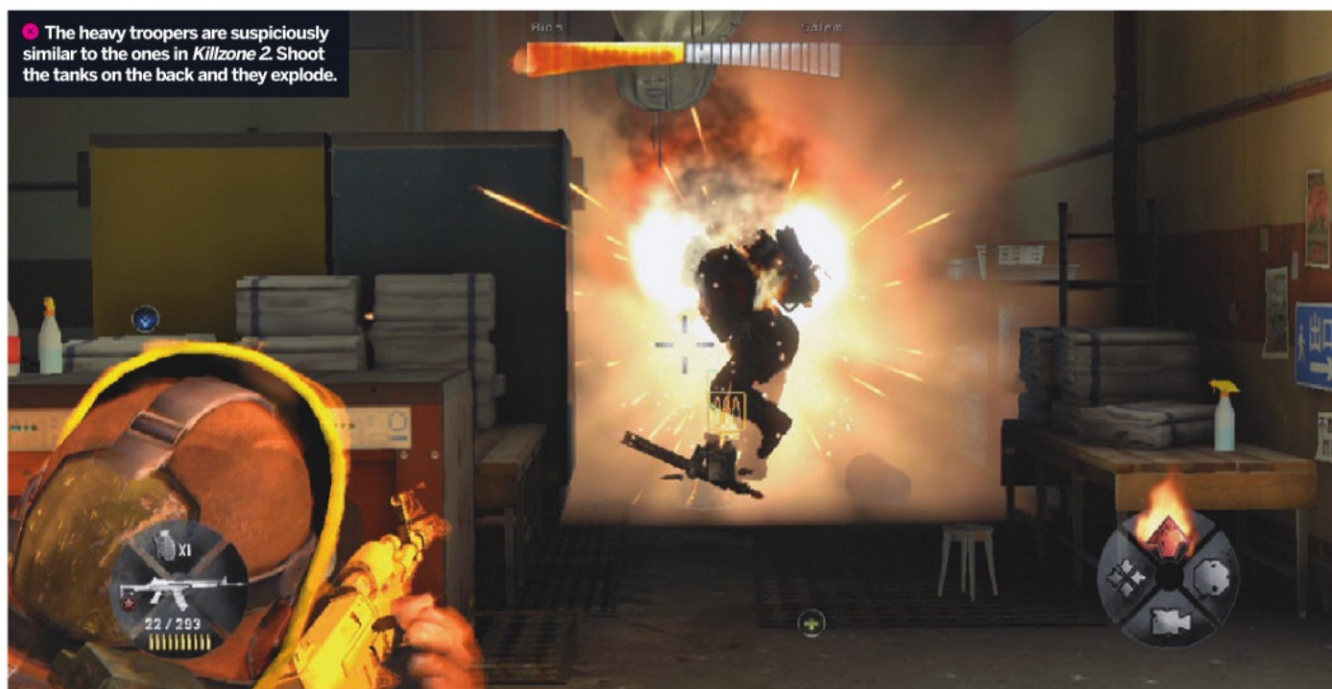
🎮 Army Of Two: The 40th Day



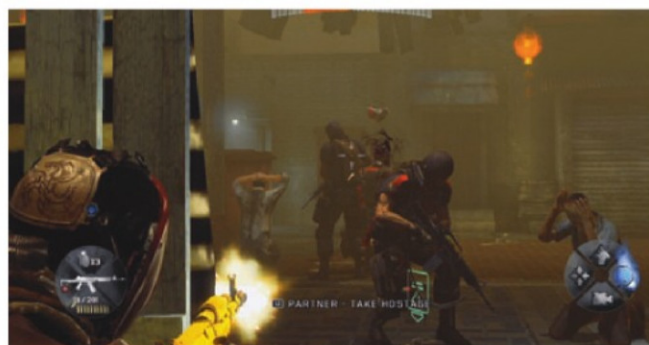
🔴 This guy uses a flame-thrower, evidently not very well.



🔴 One of many ways you can exploit the dopey enemy AI – pretending to be dead.



🔴 The heavy troopers are suspiciously similar to the ones in *Killzone 2*. Shoot the tanks on the back and they explode.



🔴 Hostage situations are supposed to be stealthy and tactical, but they don't really work very well.

of a way comes up, you won't use the Aggro system much because it requires one player to do nothing for a while, and that's boring.

Other dumb gimmicks include 'Extreme Morality' (see Spoilt Child boxout), zebra print sniper rifles (speaks for itself) and 'Play Books', which are little videos of maps, markers and arrows designed to make it look like the gameplay's really tactical, when all they're really doing is pointing out something really obvious, unnecessary or both. Not one of them genuinely adds to the experience and without them all you have is a plodding, barely competent third-person shooter with above average production values and very average everything else.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

It's only a co-op game because it says it is. The reality is that it's just a charmless third-person shooter with more gimmicks than sense. *Modern Warfare 2*'s Spec Ops mode puts EA Montreal's efforts to shame.

65%



🔴 This is the moment of total enemy stupidity described in the body of the review.

Previously...
in Play



PREVIEWED Issue 186

"While you can use dead hippos for cover in a zoo, there are no cats used as silencers."

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW [US]

God Of War Collection



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sony Santa Monica,
Bluepoint Games
Price
\$39.99
Players
1
Genre
Platformer/Beat-'Em-Up
Supports
720p
Age Rating
18
Website
www.godofwar.com

Gods be praised

With its stunning visuals, exhilarating set pieces and truly staggering boss encounters, *God Of War* set new standards on Sony's PlayStation 2 and created a new badass with the game's antihero Kratos. Such was the first game's success – it shifted well over 3 million units – a sequel was inevitable. *God Of War II* appeared on the PS2 in 2007 and not only improved on everything that made the first game so great, but in doing so pushed Sony's number two to its very limits.

In this truly impressive compilation, not only are you getting two truly fantastic games, but the collection also includes Trophy support for both titles, is rendered in high definition and runs at a wonderfully slick 60 frames per second. The American version is Region Free and can be picked up for just £30. A very worthy import, especially when you consider that the UK version won't be here until the release of *God Of War III*.

AUDIO SLAVE

Sound's fairly standard

CONSIDERING THE GRAPHICAL splendour that's been lavished upon these two games, it's a pity that *God Of War*'s thunderous soundtrack hasn't been given the same makeover. Some will say that it simply isn't needed, but it would have been nice to have an uncompressed PCM encoded track, as there is plenty of room on a Blu-ray for it and it really would have helped heighten what is already a truly impressive soundtrack.



The biggest question everyone will want answered is just how different these PS2 games look in high definition. We're delighted to say that Bluepoint Games has done an absolutely superb job with these ports. Due to its age we were most interested to see how the original *God Of War* has held up and while it's not exactly perfect – certain character models look a bit rough and the new hi-res visuals reveal just how poor textures can be – this is still impressive stuff. Kratos himself looks excellent, while the incredibly smooth frame rate makes his epic adventure even more enjoyable. Sadly, cut-scenes and FMV haven't been given the same makeover and as a result they look incredibly rosey when seen in context with the rest of the game.

If *God Of War*'s new high-definition sheen impresses then what Bluepoint Games has achieved with the 2007 sequel is even more of an achievement. Of course, being released so late in the machine's life, *God Of War II* pushed the PlayStation 2 very hard indeed, and that strain was sometimes apparent on

the PS2. Not any more, however. The ragged frame rate of the original is nowhere to be seen, while the copious screen tearing has been completely dispensed with; the end result is a truly staggering-looking game that some might actually mistake for an early PlayStation 3 game. We kid you not, it really does look that good.

So videogaming's angriest man is back on our screens and looking mighty fine, but do the actual games themselves hold up? Of course they do. Yes, the story is as trite

Easily manages to shame a great many 'proper' PS3 titles

and clichéd as ever, but it does what it does brilliantly; effortlessly hurling you from one dizzying set piece to the next. And what set pieces they are. *God Of War II* contains all the real money shots, but there are still plenty of moments playing the original where you'll be genuinely in awe of what's taking place in front of you. The Hydra battle, stabbing a Minotaur through the throat – you never forget your first time – seeing Ares as he





● The opening level of *God Of War II* has to be one of the best kick-starts ever.



● Hit him in the face! Oh, you don't really have any choice.



● *God Of War* remains the one series where QTEs are somehow acceptable.



● It's not all about violence, remember. Sometimes you get a *Tomb Raider*-style puzzle to solve.



lays waste to Athens, scaling the Cliffs of Madness; it's a breathtaking game further enhanced by the new locked frame rate that makes Kratos's insane combat skills even more satisfying to pull off.

God Of War II ups the ante even higher and while it won't take you as long to complete, it's filled with far more impressive moments. One minute you'll be running around the inside of a colossus and systematically ripping it apart, the next you'll be tearing off the wings of Griffins before hurling them earthwards. Even Zeus himself doesn't escape Kratos's savage fury and while Sony's sequel is about as subtle as a smack in the face with a sledgehammer it still manages to be one of the most entertaining action games around and easily manages to shame a great many 'proper' PS3 titles.

Some will argue that this is simply Sony cashing in and raking additional money out of one of its most beloved franchises. Yes, you could argue that the games would have looked even better if they had been rebuilt from the ground up, but once you see both titles running you simply won't care. Neither

game has ever looked better than it does here and the addition of Trophies, which are both well thought out and won't be too difficult to rinse, along with that seriously slick frame rate, just sweetens the deal.

Whether *God Of War III* will be able to live up to the massive expectation thrust upon it remains to be seen, but importing this compilation is the perfect way to pass the time while you're waiting. While we were initially cynical of Sony's E3 announcement, we're delighted with the final result and are hoping that this marks the first of a series of similar PS2 to PS3 updates. After all, imagine how good a Team Ico pack of *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus* would be? We're getting giddy just thinking about it.

Darren Jones

VERDICT

Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time at a bargain price. Even if you've never played *God Of War* you need this compilation on PS3. It's that simple.

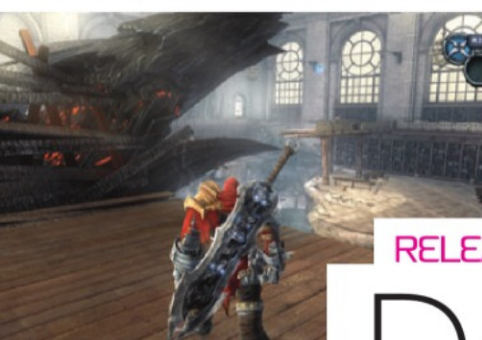
93%



● Some of the cut-scenes haven't aged that well, but they still tell an epic tale.



War's glide ability isn't as useful as you might think, but like much of *Darksiders*, looks awesome.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Darksiders

It's just like War & Peace. Without the peace...



DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
Vigil Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Supports
1080i, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
15
Website
www.darksiders.com

Whether or not a game is conceptually original is largely a moot point if the final product is honed in such a way as to incrementally increase the quality of the genre. Such is the lot for *Darksiders*. A *God Of War* clone? Some may call it that way, but in truth, its mimicry is no more blatant than, say, *Modern Warfare* is derivative of all other military FPSs to have come before. We're talking baby steps here and *Darksiders*, in many ways, edges its little pinkies just a few inches further in the right direction.



Overarchingly, a great deal of this has to do with the conceptual side of things. Comic-book artist-stroke-legend Joe Madureira, having ostensibly finished his dilly-dallyings with *Uncanny X-Men* along with an enviable repertoire of other dark scribbles, went on to found Vigil Games – *Darksiders* being its first project. His influence is clear. Rather than the usual set of generic characters – whose DNA can largely be traced back to other videogames – those who dwell within *Darksiders* are largely of a different breed; one whose ancestors reside within more respected artistic mediums. It is these characters that bring the game's story to life. Superbly designed, modelled and voiced, the *Darksiders* narrative smacks of how a Disney film might look if directed by Lou Satan – which, believe it or not, is high praise indeed. Maybe because it's so much about the exact manner in which the story is told,

rather than the strength of the story when broken down into its component parts, that you'll probably find our summary a bit of a letdown. Look: War, as in one quarter of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, is rudely summoned to Earth when Armageddon breaks out with angels and demons fighting upon the earthly plain for dominance, destroying mankind in the process. Almost as soon as he arrives, he's stripped of his powers

Like all of the best combat systems it wears the tricorn hat of balance, satisfaction and progression

by the forces of evil and must return to Earth, 100 years having passed, to restore balance and regain his former stabby prowess. See.

The game's style is a surprisingly cohesive mishmash of some of the best gameplay elements from other genre outings. As well as hacking your way through to specific objectives, the game opens up after a few



CREATURE FEATURE

Joe Mad's involvement speaks volumes

IT WOULD SEEM like a relatively inconsequential compliment to say that the NPC monster designs in *Darksiders* are monumentally superior to many of its peers. However, once you spend a little bit of time basking in

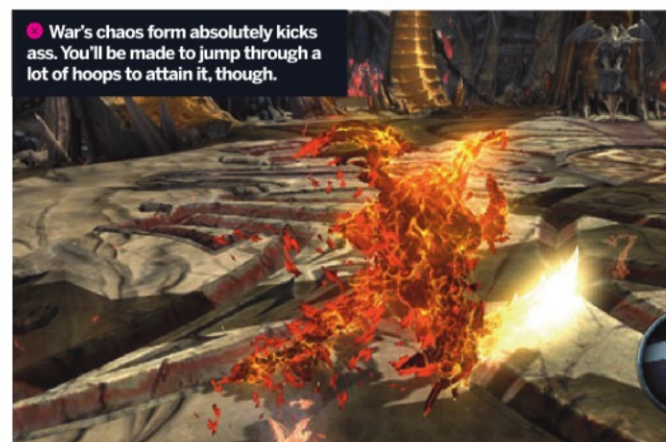
the luxury of their glorious conception, lightning will suddenly strike, perhaps even ruining some of the finer moments from similar games as their prickly demonic denizens transform in your mind's eye from evil

boss-thing to a product of a developer who is yet to try hard enough. Comic book artist/Vigil founder Joe Madureira's *Darksiders* are epic in both visual design and in their superb voice acting and animation.

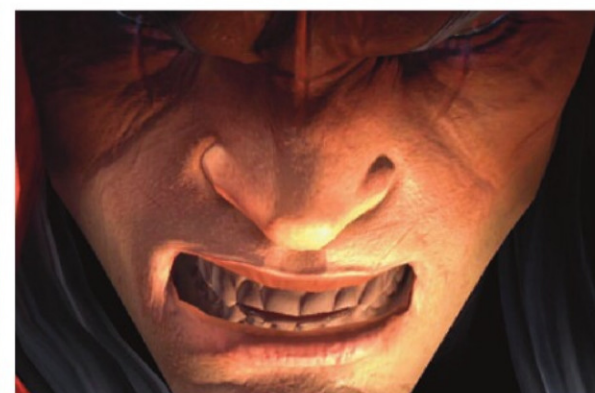




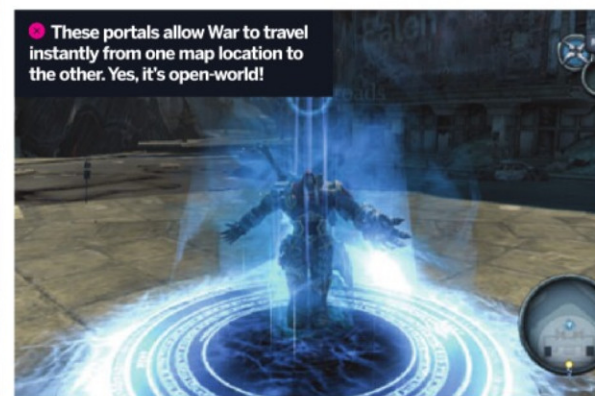
● War's chaos form absolutely kicks ass. You'll be made to jump through a lot of hoops to attain it, though.



● The glaive is pretty good fun to chuck about, but also very complicated to control.



● These portals allow War to travel instantly from one map location to the other. Yes, it's open-world!



short hours to allow War to return to parts of the world he's already visited. It's at this point that you'll realise that the game is essentially open-world. This is in more of a *Metroid* sense than, say, a *GTA* one, though, since the reason to revisit locations is not just to muck about, but is instead due to some new avenues becoming open to you. Avenues only accessible with a recently acquired power.

War is pretty good in a fight – he is War after all – and combat is another area in which the game excels. To say that it's as fun as Kratos's legendary sushi skills is high praise indeed, but true nonetheless. Like all of the best combat systems it wears the tricorn hat of balance, satisfaction and progression. Battles are challenging, without being overly fiddly, repetitive, or so easy as to allow for mindless button-bashing. Satisfaction comes from many of its elements; weak enemies can be dispatched with unique, gory animations triggered using the square

button, while stronger foes will need to be weakened a little first. Flowing from various combos seamlessly into one of these finishing animations and beyond to the next enemy never fails to get the heart pumping. And finally, progression. Vulgrim, like many of the demons in *Darksiders* serves his own ends and as such provides War with upgrades, new combos, whole new weapons and single-use items such as health in exchange for souls collected on the field of combat.

Taking a look at War's upgrade slots at the start of the game gives the instant impression that, in terms of abilities and augmentations, the game is very deep indeed when compared to its peers. As things progress, it exceeds these expectations admirably, serving up a new toy set as and when even a hint of staleness dares to rear its head.

We have only one major criticism for *Darksiders*. That despite exceeding our expectations in almost every area, apart

from the actual design of the characters and environments, the graphics can often appear a bit rosey, causing part-time onlookers to say things like 'looks crap' and causing us to chime in to its defence. 'But it plays brilliantly, look how much fun this is... look! Fun!' Of course, we can't convey this to those who stroll by without handing them the controller and letting them get on with it. Equally, whatever you take away from this review, know this; *Darksiders* deserves your time and money – you only need to grasp that DualShock to discover this for yourself.

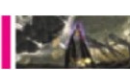
Dan Howdle

VERDICT

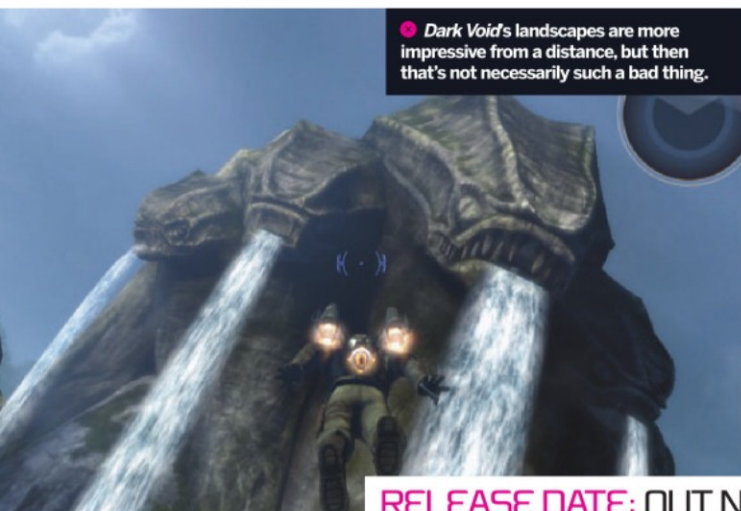
This is most definitely where it's at. Best case scenario, get this and *Bayonetta*, but do not let *Darksiders* become another *Conan*, it deserves a better fate.

83%

Or you could try



Bayonetta Issue 187
If you prefer J-action to action, this is both more skill-hungry and more bizarre **93%**



Dark Void's landscapes are more impressive from a distance, but then that's not necessarily such a bad thing.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Airtight Games
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Supports
1080i, 720p, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.darkvoidgame.com

Dark Void

You'll believe a man can fly

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's just some dude with Nolan North's voice and a pretty swanky jetpack on his back. Despite not being internally developed at Capcom, *Dark Void* still manages to capture all the trademark Capcom silliness and from its man-versus-UFO dogfights to the frankly nonsensical plot, they don't come much sillier than this. Stop us if you've heard this one – a courier pilot that sounds and acts strangely like Nathan Drake flies into the Bermuda Triangle and gets whisked away to alternate dimension The Void, where famous inventor Nikola Tesla gives him a jetpack with which to fight a bunch of alien-lizard-robot things called the Watchers so they don't take over the world. Yeah...

Bizarre set-up aside, *Dark Void* is so many games at once that it's not easy to know where to begin. At times it feels almost like a platform-based adventure game along the

lines of *Uncharted*, a comparison that's even easier to draw with the shared vocal cords and attitude between *Dark Void*'s protagonist Will and *Uncharted*'s Mr Drake. Then all of a sudden, the game turns into a cover-based shooter – it's here that it spends a lot of its time (especially early on) but if nothing else, *Dark Void* has one neat trick up its sleeve. As well as the usual 'ducking behind rubble to avoid gunfire' type cover, Airtight also implements an ingenious vertical cover system in some areas. It puts an odd but welcome twist on the usual mechanic, especially once you get your jetpack.

As soon as you sprout your ugly, steampunk wings, *Dark Void* changes entirely. Vertical cover suddenly works both up and down, meaning you can boost up to ledges and take cover beneath them while dealing with enemies above as the camera pulls in behind

you. This can be quite disorienting in some of the more confusing areas (of which there are plenty), but then we can only imagine that the ability to boost up walls and cling to things at will would indeed leave you wondering which way was really up after a while. And once you get your first taste of full flight, everything changes all over again. Where once you'd be scampering about looking for cover, you're suddenly tearing up the sky in massive dogfights, pulling alien pilots out of UFOs to give them a spin when you fancy giving the jetpack a chance to cool down.

But it's the way the flight mechanic is offered so freely from this point in that impresses most. In general, potential battlegrounds are extremely open and this leaves you all kinds of options. Do you stick to the ground cover and push forward slowly,

make a gravity-defying blast for high ground and snipe your way to victory or just go all Rocketeer on the Watchers and hope you've got enough room to play around in. That's always the biggest concern with the pack – it can be as much a hazard for you as it is a benefit if you get careless. All you need do is clip a few walls and you're done for, meaning that you'll want to spend a little time getting used to the flight controls and all the fancy tricks you can pull off. Once you nail that, swooping in for a strafing run before cutting the engines at the last second to land with a crushing melee attack on some unsuspecting fool is a treat indeed and one more satisfying and fluid than anything the likes of *Bionic Commando* can offer.

We didn't imagine we'd see gunfights, fist fights and dogfights all in one game, let alone in the space of a few seconds

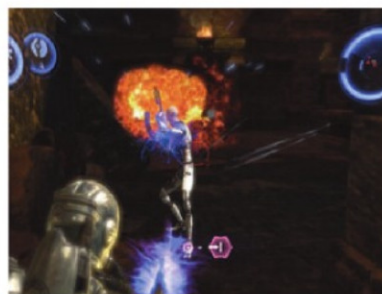
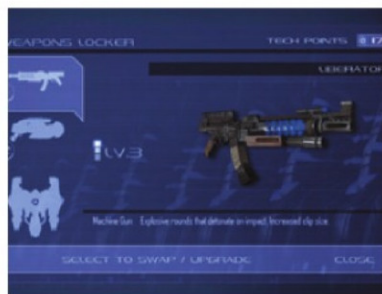
For all its rewarding moments and ingenuity, though, *Dark Void* isn't without its issues. The most apparent of these is that it really doesn't look all that great, presumably a concession made to accommodate the crazy speed you can muster with your jetpack dragging you along at full tilt. We also took mild issue with the fact that most of the guns are more or less useless until you upgrade them once or twice. In fact, only the sniper rifle really proved an asset sans tinkering, although the fully upgraded starting rifle comes with the kind of pyrotechnics not seen outside of *Borderlands*' high-end gear. Even then, however, the melee attack is still your most potent weapon, dropping most grunts in a single blow while bigger guys can easily be downed in two or three without a chance to reply. We would probably take more of an

TECH'S ON FIRE

Upgrades make everybody's life easier

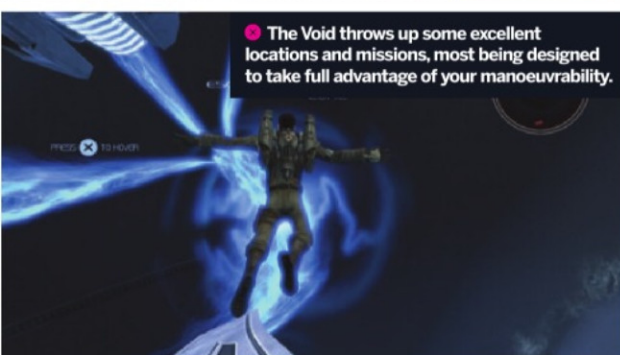
WHILE DARK VOID doesn't really have the usual amount of collectables, what it does offer (well, on top of the mildly interesting journal entries that are scattered about) are Tech Point caches that let you rush your way to a more powerful arsenal. While these are also dropped by enemies, exploring can reap even greater rewards.

You'll need them, too – as we mentioned before, a lot of the guns only really become useful once you pour a few thousand Tech Points into them. Even if you're getting on just fine, it's well worth upgrading the jetpack at least as you will come to rely on its infinite ammo guns a lot more as the game goes on.





Useful as they are, the melee kills also look cool. The ones while in vertical cover are especially empowering



The Void throws up some excellent locations and missions, most being designed to take full advantage of your manoeuvrability.



issue with this if the melee animations weren't as awesome as they are.

But it doesn't seem right to criticise such an inventive and varied game too heavily and while it clearly borrows in each of its multiple aspects, the collective whole still manages to feel fresh. The freedom and rush of 360-degree combat alone makes Airtight Games' first commercial release at least worth a look to anyone with a taste for action, and action it will provide in just about every flavour going. We didn't imagine that we would see gunfights, fist fights and dogfights all in one game, let alone in the space of a few seconds. But that's exactly what you can expect from *Dark Void*. Just don't expect it to make a whole lot of sense.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Slowly introducing elements and play styles until it blends them all to create a 'proper' 3D shooter, *Dark Void* is a unique game indeed. Airtight's debut is an interesting one.

81%



These annoying guys self-destruct when killed – a room full of them like this can be a deathtrap.



The button sequence when you hijack a UFO is instinctive and impressive, as if having your own UFO wasn't reward enough...

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Rogue Warrior

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a winner. At losing



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda Softworks
Developer
Rebellion
Price
£39.99
Players
1-8
Genre
First-person shooter
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.roguewarrior.com

We're still waiting for the punchline on this one. We absolutely refuse to accept that *Rogue Warrior* is anything but a massive joke. A satire on the state of modern first-person shooters and the gaming public's appetite for astonishingly distasteful violence. It has to be. There is no way in hell the developers of *Rogue Warrior* meant this to be a serious game. No chance.

We know, from doing the most perfunctory level of research, that *Rogue Warrior* is indeed a serious game, but our minds still won't accept it. If it were serious, we would have to tear it to pieces for being an insult to the world that spawned it. If it were serious, it would be defecating on everyone who has ever so much as thought about playing a videogame, and it smiling while doing it. It would be a bad FPS ten years ago, now it would be an insult. Graphically, it would make bland look thrilling. It would make Dick Marcinko, *Rogue Warrior*'s protagonist, out to be a hired psychopath who says things like "get dead, f***kbag" when he kills an innocent engineer. It would forget that controls are

Nowhere in the books does it mention how fond of karaoke Marcinko is.

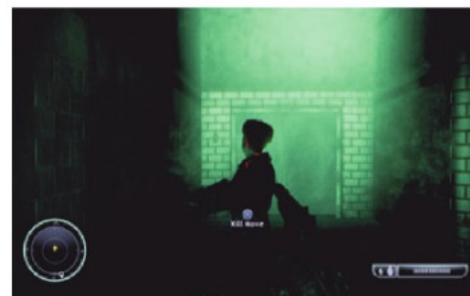


We absolutely refuse to accept that *Rogue Warrior* is anything but a massive joke

meant to control the game, and not do absolutely nothing as you stand in front of a glitching enemy for the 50th time repeatedly pressing \otimes to try to stab him in the face – which, of course, wouldn't be working. Yet again.

Rogue Warrior, if it were a serious game, would make us forget all arguments that have ever existed for making games shorter, as it took three-and-a-half hours to finish it. It would make us wonder why 'super-soldier' Marcinko apparently couldn't jump. It would make us question the training of the Commies, as around 75 per cent of them faced away from you all of the time, as if waiting to be killed by one of the 'more than 25' kill moves. It would force us to seriously reconsider the role of QA, if there actually was any involved in this game, thanks to the myriad bugs and other

The SNES kicked out better fire effects than this does.



such failings that popped up dozens of times throughout the game.

On the other hand, if the game is serious, at least *some* of the music wouldn't be completely contemptible.

All in all, though, *Rogue Warrior* would make us wish we didn't play games.

But this is all, of course, if the game is to be taken seriously. We refuse to accept that it is.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

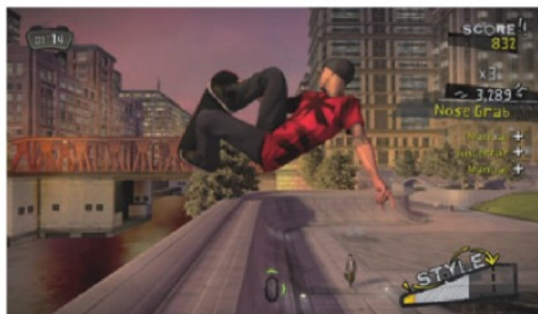
This is one of the worst games ever made. It's buggy, boring and broken. A pointless addition to anyone's collection and a new low for the once-great Rebellion.

09%

Or you could try



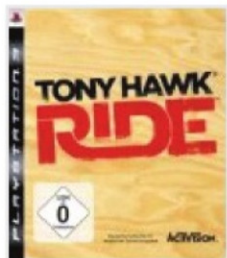
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand Issue 177
Another contentious protagonist, but a far better game surrounding him. 70%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tony Hawk: Ride

A new definition of 'board'



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Robomodo
Price
£99.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content,
Dolby Digital 5.1,
Skateboard Controller
Age Rating
PG
Website
www.thride.com

We play games for many reasons, but for most it's a chance to be taken out of the humdrum world we exist in and become someone else. To live out whatever fantasies we might have, whether it be rockstar, gangster, race driver or skater. Obviously *Ride* is hoping to put you into the overpriced shoes of the latter and make you feel like you can surf the streets from the comfort of your living room. Having managed to convince half the world with *Guitar Hero* that peripheral-based play can actually enhance a gaming experience, it makes sense then that a skateboard-shaped controller might bring something to the table.

You're left crumpled in a heap on the floor more times than a hobo full of hooch

Unfortunately this is not the case, as not only does *Ride* bring nothing to the table but it stumbles up and falls straight through it.

Living a half life between novelty party game and skate simulation, a sense of confusion exists from the off which is only compounded

There are still some pretty amazing tricks to perform even if you're not entirely sure how you're doing them.

when you step 'on board' and begin the game, as many of the movements you're told to perform do not always register on screen.

Twin this with an over-sensitive movement mechanic and your on-screen skater is left crumpled in a heap on the floor more times than a hobo full of hooch. A lack of variety is also a major foible as many of the tricks involve

simple variations of lifting the nose and tilting the board, obviously we don't expect to be grinding along our sideboards but a little more to master would be nice.

The main story mode (or Road Trip) consists of trick challenges and speed runs in different locations around the world, only punctuated to bring you inane chatter from Hawk's crew and an advert or two for good measure. Laboured loading times and constant calibration of the board also begin to grate over extended periods of play and



cause you to stare at that off button and muse whether or not the wait is actually worth it.

For mature gamers *Ride* is almost a complete write-off but all is not lost, as with a little practice younger players will enjoy the Causal setting as they compete against mates to beat times and pull off tricks even if they're not quite sure how they're doing it. If Activision persists with this new formula for *Hawk* it needs to bring something rather special next time round or players may reject it all together and actually go skateboarding... oh the horror.

Keith Hennessey

VERDICT

Leading up to launch there was a lot of promise that this might take the skating genre in a new direction but unfortunately the execution leaves a lot to be desired. The *Tony Hawk* franchise does need a reboot but this isn't it.

52%



Or you could try



Skate 2 Issue 175
Despite its flaws it still has plenty of satisfaction to give. **82%**

PSP

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ghostbusters: The Video Game

Who you gonna call? An exterminator, for this buggy mess



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Red Fly Studio
Price
£19.99
Players
1
Genre
Action/Adventure
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
7+
Website
www.ghostbustersgame.com

It seemed to take ages for the PSP version of *Ghostbusters* to be released, then it took us another age to snag review code, then it took us yet another age to figure out what could have gone wrong. The ingredients are all there: it looks fun – in a cartoony, simple way – the story from the main version is mostly present and correct and the destruction mechanic that made the PlayStation 3 version so satisfying is also available. But none of this matters, as *Ghostbusters* on PSP is, quite frankly, just a bit bugged.

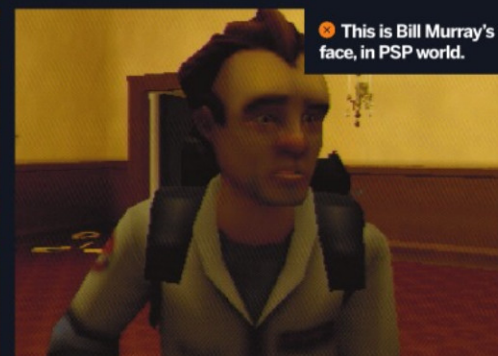
We had to restart levels on no less than seven separate occasions thanks to ghosts getting stuck in scenery and not returning to the fray. While the game looks pretty good in screenshots and cut-scenes, textures flicker and glitch through each other with gay abandon – not to mention Walter Peck's face, which simply doesn't move and instead fixes you with a mesma-stare for all eternity while he talks through a motionless mouth. The oh-so-fun destruction mechanic is



Oh Slimer, you cad.

rendered completely annoying because half the time the game doesn't even react to the fact you're blasting it with every weapon you have. And this is all before we get to the control issues or the fact that the firehouse hub section is pointless, and could very easily be replaced with a simple menu. There are a couple of other issues like the lack of wrestling with ghosts and some missing sections, but that's more down to the hardware than anything else.

Good points? Well, sections have been shortened from the home console version and made into more bite-sized levels. With each clocking in at around the ten-minute mark it's a good change, but the rewards for collectables and destruction at the end of each level won't keep you coming back. Oh, and those of you who can ignore a patently shoddy game and who haven't played through the bigger brother version of this on home consoles will find some enjoyment from the fan-service



This is Bill Murray's face, in PSP world.



At least this scene made it through, though it obviously doesn't look as spectacular.

The ingredients are all there... but *Ghostbusters* on PSP is, quite frankly, just a bit bugged

story. Other than that, we're clutching at straws. Errm... the proton streams look nice?

Why there was so much time between the release of *Ghostbusters* on PS2 and PS3 and the release on PSP we do not know. It's hard to imagine it's because there has been extensive ironing out of glitches and bugs, as what we played through was verging on being a complete shambles.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's a real shame, as *Ghostbusters* on PS3 was good fun and we were looking forward to taking that wedge of nostalgic joy wherever we went. Instead we're left wishing the PSP version had a few more months of fixing before release.

55%



Catching ghosts involves no struggle whatsoever.



Find a way through the





● The Bull talks less than the other Wild Things, which is good because the voices are all rubbish.



● One of this game's many jumping bits. Edge-of-the-seat stuff it is not.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Where The Wild Things Are

Where the good things aren't

DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros.
Developer
Griptonite Games
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Platformer/Adventure
Supports
720p, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.
wherethewildthings
arethevideogame.com

This game has an age rating of 12. No, we wouldn't normally open a review by mentioning that, but it really is a key point in the case of *Where The Wild Things Are*. It's by no means a dreadful game, but it is very, very simple, with gameplay that feels as if it's been pitched at a seven year old. But, of course, a seven year old cannot legally be supplied with it. To be honest, we're not sure there's anything much in it that's likely to cause harm to an under-12. The box says it contains 'VIOLENCE', but by that it means that giant bugs and piles of black goo get hit by a stick. Hit pretty hard mind you, but still...

Regardless of our own opinions, though, we have to respect PEGI's judgement and assess this game as something targeted at people

over 12, and when you look at it like that, it's almost impossible to recommend. Almost.

Despite the incredibly basic gameplay – an unimaginative mix of jumping, hitting and collecting – there was something we quite liked about *Where The Wild Things Are*. It's very mellow, even during scenes of 'VIOLENCE'. The music, the scenery, even the sedate gameplay, all have a dreamy quality that makes us want to play *Where The Wild Things Are* just before bed.

In that sense, we suppose it does its job very well. It's a game based on a movie based on a children's picture book, so the fact that it's the closest thing to a bedtime story in videogame form we've ever played is somewhat fitting. But a bedtime story for who?

12 year olds don't get bedtime stories, do they? They should have grown out of that by now, just as they should have grown out of simplistic collect-'em-up gameplay. The kind of thing that you usually find in the kinds of games designed to be a young kid's first

It's the closest thing to a bedtime story in videogame form we've ever played

game. But we can't recommend this to young kids. That would be irresponsible. They might copy the 'VIOLENCE'.

Given that it's based on a picture book that's just ten sentences long, we shouldn't be surprised that *Where The Wild Things Are* is shallow, simplistic and short, and by movie tie-in standards we have to admit that the presentation and production values are pretty good. But it's still a game that doesn't really seem to be for anybody. Certainly not us.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

If you're a fan of the movie or book, you're either too old to enjoy the patronising gameplay or too young to play it. Not terrible, but it's pretty boring and short.

56%

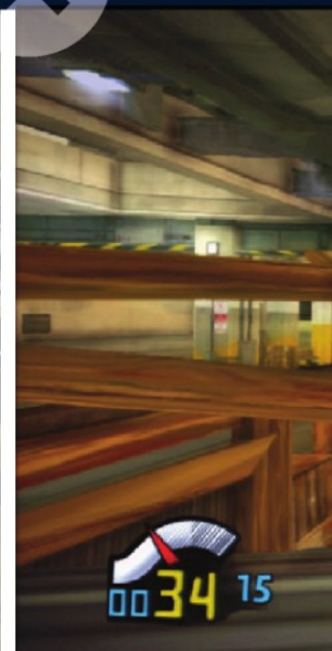


● Sometimes you get to throw rocks using a reticle. It's almost like a shooter (it's not).

Or you
could try



Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues Issue 187
Probably the best movie-based game for youngsters around at the moment. **71%**



"The Tony Hawk franchise does need a reboot but this isn't it" 52%

Ride looks as murky online as it does off, only dampening the experience further.



Tony Hawk: Ride

When peripherals go too far

DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Robomodo
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£99.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Skating
Supports
720p, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1, Tony
Hawk Skateboard

Price in reference to games is always a touchy issue. Some say they should always be taken into account whereas others worry that doing so will give cheaper offerings scores they don't deserve. Regardless of which side of the fence you sit on, though, everyone should expect a game to come packed with a satisfying amount of content. In a world where *Assassin's Creed II* has extended its experience to 20 or so hours, *Uncharted* expanded to incorporate multiplayer and *Modern Warfare 2* making the PSN its headquarters for months to come, there's no excuse for any game not to follow suit. As we're sure you've figured out, *Tony Hawk: Ride* is surprisingly short on substance.

Before we get into the thick of it, it seems only right to say that there is no point even thinking about venturing online unless the board beneath your feet has clicked with you in some sense. Even though you can choose

which difficulty level you compete at – casual, confident or hardcore – it's far less forgiving online than it is off: the safe comfort zone of the pause menu is no more. If the appeal is still there, however, we'd be shocked if you weren't disappointed somewhat.

As soon as you head online, you might think something has gone amiss. With a franchise that in the past has boasted a wealth of multiplayer options, *Ride* has only two: Trick and Speed. While it doesn't take a genius to figure out what each does, both run out of steam incredibly quickly.

Starting with the former, Trick asks you to do what the *Tony Hawk* series has always prided itself on: compete with other skaters to try to get the highest score over a set time period. Although in principle the challenge remains the same, the sparkle just isn't there any more.

Anyone familiar with previous entries will remember a large part of the fun came from the direct competition, a feature which doesn't seem to exist in any sense with *Ride*. If you somehow manage to get a game (see *Ghost Town* boxout) your rival will vanish from your screen within seconds. If you opt for casual,

It's baffling that many of Tony Hawk's beloved modes from the past haven't returned for *Ride*

the fixed direction ensures you forget you're even going head-to-head whereas those who opt for a more testing setting will still get pangs of loneliness as they search for what now seems to be a mysterious adversary. It's a near certainty you'll suffer the same withdrawal symptoms when playing Speed. Simply switching the objective to standard race rules

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



● Be warned when going onto the PSN with *Ride*. We're convinced many opponents simply use their hands instead of their feet.



● The big question that constantly hangs over the latest *Tony Hawk* is simple: where, on Earth, are all the modes?

does nothing to elevate the fun and is likely to see you seeking other forms of entertainment as you realise there's nothing else to do.

It's baffling that many of *Tony Hawk's* beloved modes from the past haven't returned, H.O.R.S.E. being at the top of that list, and in its place is a very lacklustre attempt at a multiplayer option. We strongly advise contemplating something else if the need for some online action takes control.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Lacking in options and dying a slow, painful death because of a poor, almost nonexistent community, *Tony Hawk: Ride* is in desperate need of players. If you manage to find a match you may enjoy it for all of ten minutes, but the lack of depth becomes apparent far too fast.

★☆☆☆☆

GHOST TOWN

Where have all the skaters gone?

LET US PAINT you a picture. It's a cold, windy Saturday night and an odd incident with a car door has made us question if the world is out to get us. We get home, have a quick bite to eat, then set up *Tony Hawk: Ride*, preparing all the little touches to ensure when we're done, we can see what Activision's latest has in store over PSN. After calibrating the board, we enter the online menu and search for a quick game. No luck. Instead, we try a custom match. No luck. Fine, we'll set up our own lobby. No luck. After sitting in our created forum for over half an hour, we returned to the first choice, only this time mashing (X), hoping to find a competitor. After an age we found a single player who was more than happy to indulge us. It says a lot that in all our time in the *Ride* servers, we only competed against four people, all of whom were in separate games. You have been warned.

PSN Roundup

ROGUE WARRIOR

It's as if they didn't even bother

Publisher: Bethesda Developer: Rebellion Games Price: £34.99 Players: 1-12 Genre: FPS

If you're quite the videogame critique connoisseur, you may be aware that Rebellion's *Rogue Warrior* hasn't been doing so well. Overly violent, poorly designed and rather frustrating, it's not a game you should be in any hurry to play. The exact same feeling is experienced when venturing online.

Arriving on the PSN as basic as they come, *Rogue Warrior* offers just two modes: deathmatch and team deathmatch. Set up as you'd expect, the gameplay is shockingly poor. Controls are sluggish, aiming never seems to be heading in the direction you're pointing and the servers are beyond dead. It's almost as if there's another FPS doing a better job...

With lifeless map design and an all-round poor display in every area, there is no reason to



ever head forth to the *Rogue Warrior* servers. There's plenty of other options, all of which do the job far, far better. SM

★★★★★

BAND HERO

One for a social crowd who will never even know it's there...

Publisher: Activision Developer: Neversoft Price: £49.99 (solus), £149.99 (pack) Players: 1-8 Genre: Rhythm Action

As we all now realise, *Band Hero* does, in some way, make sense. As the brand continues to dominate the rhythm-action world, Activision has seen fit to release a version aimed at the casual fan. To its credit, it works, with artists such as Taylor Swift and Lily Allen satisfying a wider base. As unlikely as it is this group would go online – surely *Band Hero's* point is to get your friends round and play – what's on offer is identical to *Guitar Hero 5*.

Without doubt one of the last major iteration's highlights was how it expanded its multiplayer modes and *Band Hero* follows suit featuring more of a gamey template. Ideas such as Momentum and Do Or Die mean there's a greater competitive aspect. Unfortunately, they aren't as engaging as before. While the former's



challenge of increasing the difficulty worked with tougher songs, the majority in *Band Hero* are so simple it becomes a little dry.

It's nice to see the expanded framework ported across. It's just not as well suited. SM

★★★★★

JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR: THE GAME

It's better than not having the option

Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Ubisoft Price: £49.99 Players: 1-16 Genre: Third-Person Shooter

Since day one Ubisoft has made it clear that *Avatar* was more than your average movie tie-in. With a longer development cycle, it wanted to show that when done right, a game could back up a film with some serious weight. Unfortunately, the single-player only found moderate success. It looks likely the multiplayer will follow suit.

It's admirable that the French Canadian developer went to the extremes of including it, backing up our original point. The problem lies with *Avatar's* base mechanics. Although it features expected modes such as team deathmatch, capture the flag and King Of The Hill, among others, it feels slightly too clunky and unbalanced to truly suck you in. Keeping in the game's extra powers, such as speed and a health recharge, does add an extra layer, but ultimately Ubisoft never crafts



an experience smooth enough to allow you to feel comfortable. It's certainly not bad and the community is surprisingly solid, but only head onto its servers if offline you warmed to *Avatar's* somewhat hit-and-miss mechanics. SM

★★★★★



It's less reliant on set pieces than more recent CODs, but there are still some good ones, like this brilliant car chase.



You'll spend a lot of time taking cover, especially on the higher difficulty settings.

Sometimes it shows its age a bit. One guy gets blown sky high by a grenade; the guy next to him doesn't flinch.



Call Of Duty Classic GAME

First Call at the BAR

DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Infinity Ward
Release Date
Out now
Price
£11.99
Players
1-8
Genre
FPS

If you're a staunch PlayStation supporter, and we suspect most of our readers probably are, then there's every chance that you've never played either of Infinity Ward's World War II-set *Call Of Duty* titles. *Finest Hour*, *Big Red One*, *Call Of Duty 3* and *World At War* all appeared on PlayStation platforms, but all were developed not by the creator of the series, Infinity Ward, but by the long-time Activision jobbers at Treyarch.

It encourages you to have some balls, be aggressive and push forward

As such they were, y'know, alright, but you weren't getting the real thing. *Call Of Duty Classic*, though, is the real thing. Yes, it might have been brought over to the PlayStation 3 by porting specialist Aspyr Media, but this is still definitely an Infinity Ward product. Infinity Ward's first product, in fact. And you know what? Despite being six years old now, it still holds up incredibly well.

It does take a little while to adjust, mind you, the main difference being that you have a health bar that does not replenish itself, meaning you have to collect health packs when you get wounded. Fortunately there are a lot of those about, seeing as most enemies seem to drop one that will pep you up by 25 per cent, and while some might knock it for being old-fashioned, we'd argue there are advantages to this system. It actually

encourages you to have some balls, be aggressive and push forward in order to kill more enemies

and steal their health, rather than just hiding for a bit every time you take a bullet. That said, this is a pretty tough game, and there are some situations that become near-impossible to overcome once your health is in the red, which is pretty frustrating. Swings and roundabouts, though, we suppose.

You also have to get used to not being able to run or vault and having to select a

grenade from your inventory, but these minor issues don't detract from what is otherwise still a superbly designed game. There's a tense feeling of edging forwards against intimidating odds, with every step into enemy territory feeling like a victory in itself. You don't really get that in the more recent *Call Of Duty* titles, and to tell the truth, we miss it. You do get a lot of blockbuster set pieces in recent CODs, and it has to be said that there are far fewer of those in *COD Classic*. There are some, though, and they're very good in their own right, but perhaps not possessed of the same 'Woah!' factor as those in *MW2*.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Worth checking out, not just as a slice of history, but as a very good game in its own right that still stands up today. It may not have *MW2*'s polish, but it's still as well designed and engaging as ever.

90%



● *Blast Off* is another enjoyable release from Halfbrick Studios.

Minis on the march

Your guide to the latest Minis

WITH MINIS NOW playable on your trusty PS3, we've decided to have another roundup of the best and worst titles that are currently available. One of our favourites this month is easily *Echoes* (Halfbrick Studios/£2.49/88%). It's a simple puzzle game that has you collecting crystals, which in turn leaves an identical copy of yourself that needs to be avoided.

Dracula is a fast and furious twin-stick blaster

Let's Golf! (Gameloft/£3.99/60%), on the other hand, is far less impressive, being a rather simplistic golf game. Our advice? Save yourself for *Everybody's Golf 2* instead.

Mahjongg Artifacts: Chapter 2 (G5 Entertainment AB/£3.49/72%) manages to mix a story mode with tile matching to surprisingly good effect, while *Sudoku* (Electronic Arts/£3.99/58%) is extremely lazy

and offers nothing fans of the game won't have seen a million times before. *Yummy Yummy Cooking Jam* (Virtual Toys SL/£3.99/78%) happens to be a fun take on *Cooking Mama* that has you creating dishes as quickly as possible for a family of vampires, but isn't a patch on *Blast Off* (Halfbrick Studios/£2.49/84%), a fun little game that has you battling gravity in order to rescue stranded astronauts.

Telegraph Crosswords (Sanuk Games/£3.49/62%) is a perfectly decent crossword

tool that's let down by fiddly controls, but you'd be better off putting that £3.49 towards *Dracula – Undead Awakening* (Chillingo/£3.99/79%), a fast and furious twin-stick blaster that works surprisingly well on the PSP. Easily our favourite release of the month, however, is the excellent *Pinball Dreams* (Cowboy Rodeo/£3.99/93%) that features four more amazing tables and is hellishly addictive to boot.



● A simple crystal-collecting puzzle game, *Echoes* is one of our favourite Minis this month.

BLUE TOAD MURDER FILES: THE MYSTERIES OF LITTLE RIDDLE EPISODES I & II GAME/DLC

Great fun... while it lasts

Publisher Relentless Software **Developer** In-House **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £6.29/£9.99 for both episodes **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Puzzle

THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE buying *Blue Toad Murder Files* and if you do, then buy the double pack. Each episode lasts little longer than an hour, making them costly purchases. This would be fine if the 12 puzzles changed each time you revisited them, but they don't; meaning that *Blue Toad Murder Files* has no replay value at all. It's fun with a group of friends, but there's no real substance on offer.



Episode 1 **65%** Episode 2 **61%**

BRAID GAME

Well worth the lengthy wait

Publisher Hothead Games **Developer** Number None **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Puzzle/Platformer

JONATHAN BLOW'S SUPERB thinking man's platformer was released over a year ago on XBLA but *Braid's* late arrival on PS3 matters not, as it's one of the best games on the online service. Taking control of Tim you simply dodge enemies and gather puzzle pieces in order to solve each of *Braid's* wonderfully abstract worlds. Death doesn't matter here either as you can simply rewind time whenever Tim gets in trouble. Oh, and did we mention that the manipulation of time itself is needed to solve many puzzles?



The fact that it remains a brilliant title that will have you working your grey matter as much as your trigger finger is testament to Blow's development skills. **93%**

MADDEN NFL ARCADE GAME

Madden-ingly disappointing

Publisher Electronic Arts **Developer** Tiburon **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £9.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Sports

MADDEN HAS COME a long way since its Mega Drive days. The latest retail *Madden* offers an incredibly comprehensive set of rules that, while making it a great and authentic game, don't make it very accessible to newcomers.



Frustratingly, Tiburon has gone in the opposite direction with its impressive-looking PSN release, as it's a little too basic for our tastes. The number of plays has been greatly reduced and the 100-yard line has been reduced to just 60, but in doing all this, all we have now is a bland *Madden* by numbers. Another PSN fumble, unfortunately. **58%**

HYPERBALLOID HD GAME

Don't worry Shatter, you're still the best in our eyes

Publisher Alawar Entertainment **Developer** iSquared Games **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £2.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Arcade

TALK ABOUT BAD timing. *Hyperballoid HD* is an entertaining take on *Arkanoid* that offers decent value, funky visuals and genuinely fun gameplay. Sadly it's been beaten to the punch by the superior *Shatter*, which, while double the price, is a far more enjoyable take on the genre.



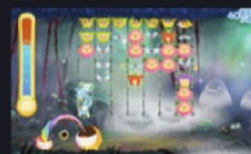
That being said, this is still going to appeal to those who like their gameplay distinctly old-school. The level design is quite clever at times, with rotating walls and other interesting hazards to negotiate; while there are a range of nifty power-ups to choose from. In short, it's simple, throwaway fun. **70%**

CRITTER CRUNCH GAME

PSN gets its first essential puzzler

Publisher Cappybara Games **Developer** In-House **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £4.49 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Puzzle

IF YOU'VE NOT downloaded *Critter Crunch* then you're missing out on one of the PS3's best downloadable games. While its gameplay is incredibly simple – swallow cute critters then feed them to bigger ones to clear an ever-filling screen – it's also amazingly polished. Power-ups are cleverly introduced the more you progress, the presentation is faultless, while the huge amount of levels and gameplay modes ensure that you'll be enjoying its many charms for ages. High-class puzzlers on PSN are still rare at the moment, so don't let this one pass you by. **91%**



BORDERLANDS: THE ZOMBIE ISLAND OF DR NED DLC

The best piece of DLC yet?

Publisher 2K Games **Developer** Gearbox Software **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £6.29 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** First-Person Shooter

IT MAY BE seen by some as a poor man's *Fallout 3*, but 2K Games sure knows how to make decent DLC. You'll need to be at least level ten to enter the world of Dr Ned, but it's the only issue we have with this great piece of DLC. Yes, some of the monsters are just sporting new skins and there are no new weapons or items, but it's a charming adventure, with a story that's more engaging and far funnier than anything *Fallout* had to offer. A great example of good DLC. ★★★★★





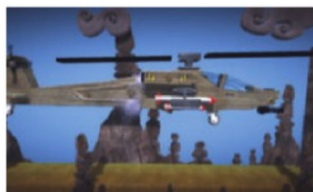
The LittleBigPlanet-arium

There are a lot of big lizards of one type or another in this month's selection – must be something about the way their bodies are articulated that really suits the game or something



Want us to feature your LittleBigPlanet level? Email us at: play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with a name, description and tell us why!

LEVELS OF THE MONTH



A LONG WAY CREATOR: lil-klash16

THIS LEVEL DOESN'T have much of a story or present much of a challenge. It's essentially a series of very clever ways to use physics, our favourite being the buggy that can flip itself over and drive upside down.



THE DINOSAUR CITY ~DINOSAURS STRIKE BACK~ CREATOR: Geppa

THE ATTENTION TO detail gives this level a great disaster B-movie feel and the dinosaurs look fantastic. There are a few tricky bits but overall it's just a lot of fun.



MEDIEVAL TIMES: REVISITED CREATOR: PacJonno

A LONG AND varied level with loads of good ideas and polished presentation. Highlights include a dragon ride, a novel boss fight against the Black Knight and a retelling of the level in mini-theatre form.



ODD GRAVITY CREATOR: Crisofilax

IT MAY NOT be much to look at, but this level makes great use of a forced physics glitch to cause different coloured platforms to have different levels of gravity. The result is a mix of puzzles and classic platforming.



THE UNFAIR PLATFORMER CREATOR: Dr_Vab

AS THE TITLE suggests, this level is deliberately unfair, and has a sadistic sense of humour, too. Some might find it annoying, but we found the way it predicted what we'd do and punished us for it very funny.



TEST SUBJECT CREATOR: Tactical_Gunner

A LEVEL THAT has everything: sneaky puzzles, clever devices, a twisting plot and loads of humour. Similarly to The Unfair Platformer, it likes to mess with your head, but it's always in the name of fun.



SACK-GOD OF CHAOS ACT 1 CREATOR: amblaze

THIS LEVEL INSISTS that it's not *God Of War*, but this must be a joke seeing as the hero is called Sacktos and the design uses loads of material from the *God Of War* pack. Not as good as the real thing, but not at all bad.



DEATH TOWER AND THE PRINCESS'S HEART CREATOR: Stik

MEDIEVAL TIMES HAS a brilliant dragon, but this level's fire-breathing lizard is even better. The rest of the level's great, too, with loads of puzzles and secret areas.

HOME ROUNDUP

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Your monthly roundup of events and happenings on PlayStation Home

IN THE LAST month or so we have seen a couple of celebrations come and go – first the holiday season was acknowledged with Santa and his elves dipping into Home. Unfortunately they'll be long gone by the time this issue hits the shelves, so if you haven't seen them already you'll probably have to wait till next Christmas. Another party was had to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Home, with visitors to the event given their own tree house to lark about in. Again though, this ended last month, so you only have yourselves to blame if you missed it.

But what about things you actually can take part in? Well, you could always head over to the *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* camp personal space: a beachfront campsite complete with dance tent. And that's about it. Once you've left that



Want a more sterile environment? Impossible.



This dance tent probably houses those gittish 'silent discos' the 'kids' have.



VICKIE



How To Build... Ice Skates

By SuperMassiveGav

Sackboy wants to go ice skating, but they don't make skates small enough for his little feet. We'll just have to make him some really big ones instead



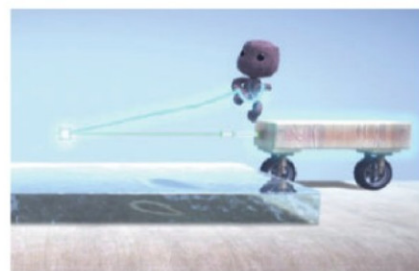
1 Make your ice rink using a really big sheet of glass. It's height should be about that of a standard creature wheel.



2 Once you've created the ice rink the first thing you'll need to do is make a flat metal blade shape then a sponge boot shape one path deep and stick the blade onto the bottom of the boot.



3 Capture this object, which should now look at least something like an ice skate, then place it on the middle path at the left-hand end of the ice rink you created in step one.



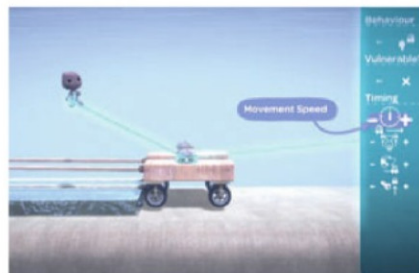
4 Make a wooden block with a creature wheel at either end. Capture it then place it on the middle path just off the right-hand end of the ice. Put a piston on its left-hand end.



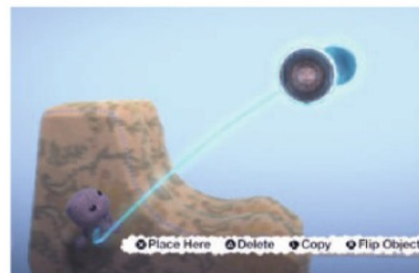
5 Connect the piston to the toe of the boot, then pause the game and tweak the piston. Set the shortest length to 50 less than the longest and make it invisible. Keep the game paused from now on.



6 Place a protected brain on the wooden block and set the speed to the maximum of 4.0. Leave everything else as it is.



7 Place another skate in front of the first one and another wheeled block in front of the first one of those. Put a brain on the block and create a piston as before.



8 Again, set the shortest length of the piston to 50 less than the longest and make it invisible. In addition, set the sync to 2.0s.



9 Place a dark circle above and in front of your skates then stick the level entrance on it. When you start, Sackboy should pop out and grab the moving skates.



● We're not sure why it's called *Sodium One*. Maybe there's salt trading involved.



● This looks surprisingly good for a Home game, truth be told.



● Unfortunately you can't drive the car, but it has no wheels anyway.



▷ constant thrill ride, Home visitors should definitely check out the Audi space, especially if you have a fondness for not only looking at car adverts, but going out of your way to invite them into your home – as we all know, there's no such as thing as having too many adverts! There are pretty cars – we all love a bit of Audi – and you can play a mini-game based on the e-tron, Audi's electric car. But, to be fair, it isn't the first place you're going to be heading to this month in Home.

So what about the best thing we have to talk about on PlayStation Home this month? Well, the launch of *Sodium One* last month was certainly a step in the right direction towards making Home an essential part of the PlayStation 'experience' – to use a horrible marketing term. It's a mini-MMO that allows players to take on quests, battle in tanks and socialise in taverns, backed up by micro-transactions. The game has literally just launched at the time we're writing this, so we have no idea if it'll prove to be a success or not, or even which territory it's going to be available. We do know, however, that it sounds very interesting indeed and could be something of a turning point in the fortunes of Home. We shall, as they say, see.

Including: Ten Of The Best... unlikely forms of transport /// The Play Quiz /// Guilty Pleasures

Ten of the best...

...unlikely forms of transport

Forget cars, bikes and boats. They're ten a penny in videogame town. Here we highlight a few of the more unusual means of getting about and the games you can find them in



Metal Slug X Camel Slug

In a game where a single bullet hit can remove a whole life, you really don't want to ride into battle on the back of something made entirely from flesh and bone. But that's exactly what happens in this classic PSone shooter. It's not ideal, but at least the camel's equipped with a pair of cannons.



BCV: Battle Construction Vehicles Excavator

This agricultural vehicle would normally be used for digging holes in the real world. But not in the world of videogames. Instead, budget PS2 title *BCV* has you using the diggers to fight each other to the death. Quite why this isn't an Olympic sport yet, we don't know.



Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Tram

In a series that gives you the keys to almost every vehicle imaginable, *San Andreas*'s tram is fairly unique. You can't ride it and you can't drive it either. Find a way to climb atop, however, and you can enjoy a rolling view of the city, albeit at a speed little faster than walking.



Shadow The Hedgehog Jeep

A spin-off character from *Sonic*, Shadow is capable of running at high speeds so shouldn't really need a vehicle at all. But his title videogame is a truly ludicrous one, so why not put a high speed hedgehog behind the wheel of a jeep? Especially when it lets him do a drive-by shooting.



Penguin Adventure Cloud

Ah, the penguin; one of those unusual birds that's unlucky enough to have wings that don't allow it the power of flight. This ancient MSX game put that right, however, with a power-up that floated him through the air. You can experience it on PSone via the *Konami Antiques: MSX Collection*.



Final Fantasy Chocobo

Less imaginative RPGs would have you explore their world on the back of a horse. But that's really quite boring and predictable isn't it? How about a giant yellow chicken? *Final Fantasy* allows you to ride a bird into battle but, sadly, you can't turn them into a giant KFC if and when one dies.



Assassin's Creed II Horse And Carriage

Riding a horse in the first *Assassin's Creed* game was such a bad idea. Despite its innocent appearance, the activity somehow revealed to everyone that you were a killer. The sequel adds a carriage to the back of that horse, which appears to have attracted even more unwanted attention.



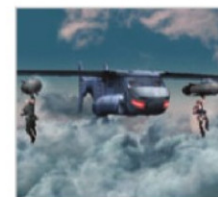
Policenauts Slingshot

Kojima's early PSone adventure, *Policenauts*, sees hero Jonathan Ingram sneak aboard an industrial catapult designed to throw resource units from the moon to the nearest space station. Weirdly, cult sci-fi film, *Moon*, used a similar idea. Serves Kojima right for trying to make games into films for so long.



Bomberman Fantasy Race Rooey

The Rooey was first used as a steed for *Bomberman*, to effectively give him an extra life in battle, but in this forgotten PSone game he became a vehicle in a poor *Mario Kart* clone. Oddly, Rooey was absent from the PS2 sequel, which replaced the unique steed with boring go-karts.

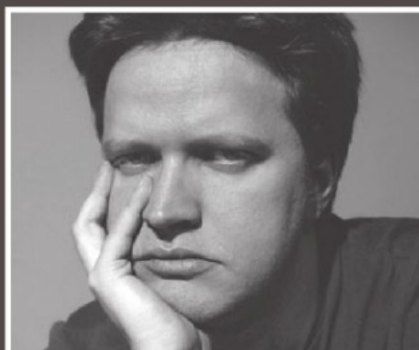


Contra: Shattered Soldier Aircraft Wing

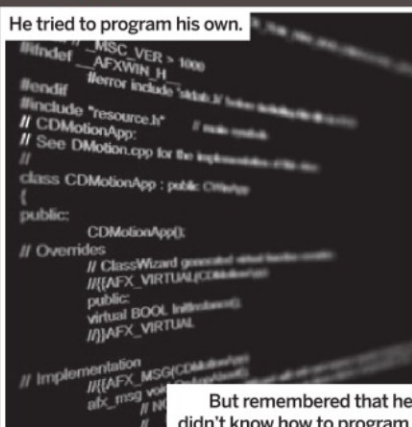
Just Cause and its sequel may have wowed everyone with the ability to hang from the back of various flying machines, but it was the *Contra* series that did it first. And better. Dangling from the missile of an aircraft, with one arm free to fire your gun, is the ultimate extreme sport.

GAME undeR

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...

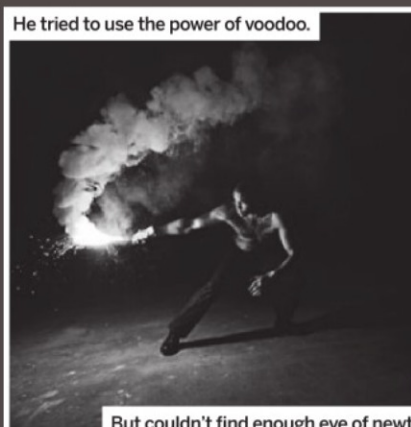


Jack loved his new PSPgo but was upset to find that there wasn't a cable to transfer his existing UMD games to digital form.



He tried to program his own.

But remembered that he didn't know how to program.



He tried to use the power of voodoo.

But couldn't find enough eye of newt.

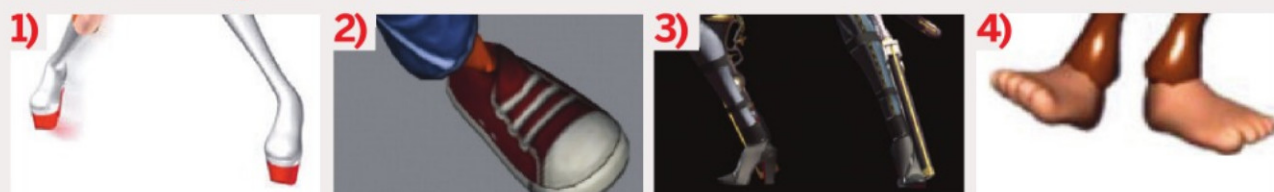


So he turned to piracy instead.

It's the PlayStation quiz so hard that even the Play team can't do it, and they made it in the first place. Good luck, you'll need it...

Let's get quizzical!

"How often do you look at a man's shoes?" asked Morgan Freeman in *The Shawshank Redemption*. Well, what about videogame characters' feet? This month we want you to tell us who these belong to...



What's in a name? Well in this case it's points. Tell us in which games these people appear as the lead character...

- 5) Lucas Kane
- 6) Fargus
- 7) George Stobart
- 8) Axel Steel
- 9) Ash Lambert
- 10) Richard Miller



We all love PlayStation exclusives, but they're not always possible. All of the following games also appeared on one other console each. But which ones?

- 11) *Headhunter*
- 12) *Killer7*
- 13) *Sexy Parodius*
- 14) *Army Men: Major Malfunction*
- 15) *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up*

Videogame movies... We all know they're generally pretty rubbish. But which game-to-film adaptations were these movie directors responsible for?

- 16) Andrzej Bartkowiak
- 17) Christophe Gans
- 18) Simon West
- 19) Paul WS Anderson
- 20) Xavier Gens



So how did you do in our world-famous **Play** quiz? To those of you who cheated, we've been watching you, and we're not impressed.

Answers on page 95

GUILTY PLEASURES

The games we love to play... but probably should know better



Global Defence Force

We have no defence for this

Format: PS2 Released: 2007
Reviewed: N/A Score: N/A%

THIS CULT JAPANESE SERIES recently shot to fame for its Xbox 360 incarnation and its sub-par visuals. The series actually began on PS2 and features near-identical graphics that were just as embarrassing a generation ago. As a run-and-gun blaster that pits you against a thousand identical giant bugs at a time, *Global Defence Force* is hardly the most impressive example of gameplay either. At times it feels like the sort of thing you'd find on the Xbox 360's abysmal Indie Games channel, all lazily copied and pasted assets and really rudimentary gameplay, but it does have a certain charm.

The enemies may have zero AI and predictable attack patterns but that hardly matters when there's a ton of them on screen at once. You go into battle with a bunch of NPC partners, but they die within seconds, and then it's you against the horde. There's no time to think, so you just have to blast away and take them all down as soon as you can. Although 'down' might be the wrong word. Shoot a bug with anything more powerful than a handgun and you'll generally send them flying through the air and bouncing off the walls. Shoot any building too, and it'll come crashing down around you. Both effects really giving you a childlike sense of glee that make *Global Defence Force* feel a lot more fun than it really has any right to.

We've pumped hours of our life into the *EDF/GDF* series, much against our better judgement. Once you've played a couple of levels you've seen pretty much everything the series has to offer. But the simple pleasures of this budget shooter offer so much fun in exchange for so little effort that you somehow find yourself wading through level after level of giant monsters even when you know you've got much better, more sophisticated games at your disposal.

The Saboteur PS3

THIS MINI-GUIDE DETAILS ALL THE THINGS YOU CAN DO AND SEE IN OCCUPIED PARIS, WHERE TO FIND THEM AND HOW TO COMPLETE THEM

Details

Publisher EA **Developer** Pandemic Studios **Price** £49.99
Players 1 **Genre** Sandbox **Age Rating** 15+ **Website** www.thesaboteurgame.com

RACES

At certain points throughout the game you'll be given the chance to take part in races. Don't worry about not having a suitable car, since you can head towards the mission marker and the nearby NPC will have a car more than capable of winning the race, so just pinch his.

To win the races, avoid putting on the brakes since this will slow you down far too much. When you come to a corner, either take it sharply or tap **X** to use the handbrake instead, which should keep your speed up.



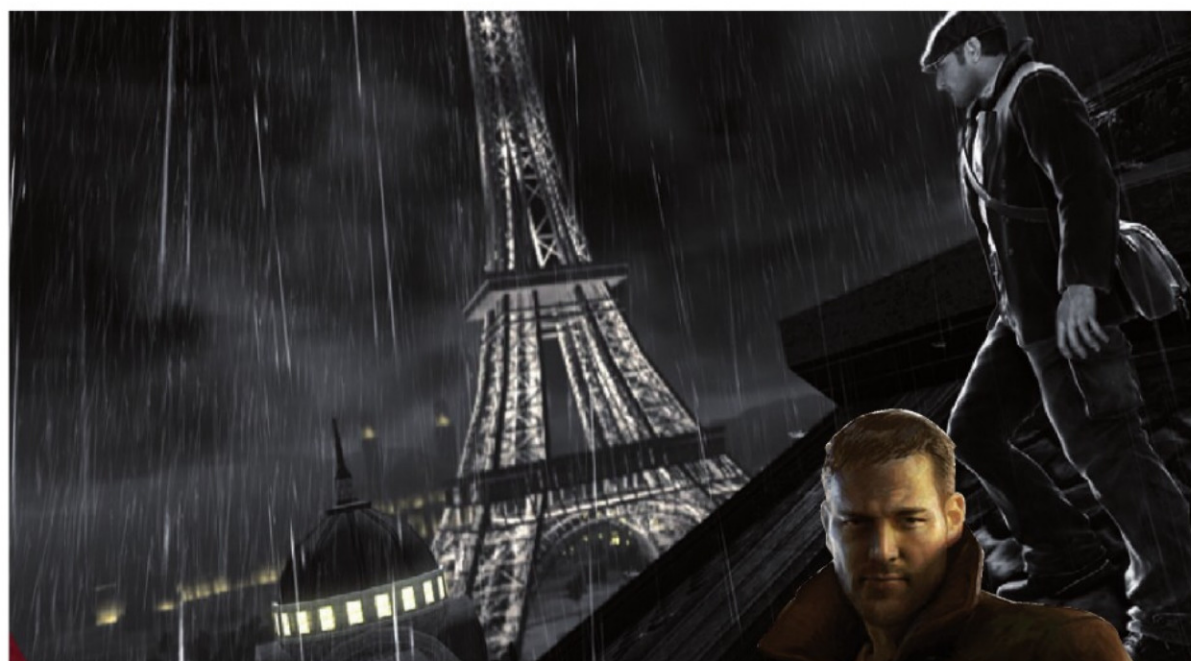
GRAND THEFT AUTO

Sean is a man who likes his cars, and as such there are a variety to collect. Each time you enter a new vehicle, you will be prompted with a message on the top of the screen informing you of whether you have collected that type of vehicle or not. If you haven't, drive it back to any of the garages dotted around the city and get out. A message will appear informing you that you have now collected that car.



DESTRUCTION TARGETS

In each of the sections of the game there are a number of freeplay targets that need to be destroyed. To help you with this, you can buy a map from the black marketers for each of the areas at 200 contraband each. These maps highlight freeplay targets as small,



white dots on the map, and represent anything from vehicles, towers or propaganda that needs destroying. All you'll need is an explosive to destroy the target, be it a rocket launcher or dynamite.



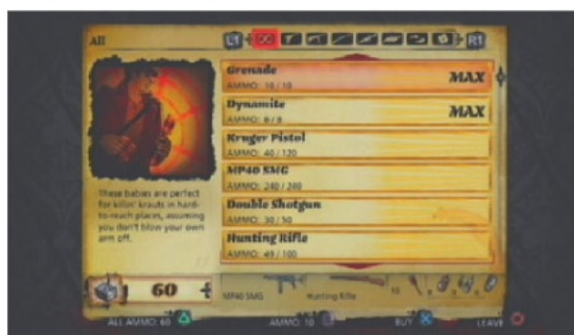
SEE THE SIGHTS

Not only are you able to travel around and visit the popular sights of Paris, such as the Eiffel Tower or the Arc de Triomphe, but scattered around the game are a number of postcards that you can collect. These are often located near key buildings. Your stats page from the start menu tells you which section has however many postcards left, should you need to find out.



STOCK UP ON WEAPONS

There's a Trophy for this, so you will want to aim to get it anyway. You won't be able to purchase every weapon until towards the end of the game, since new ones unlock all the time. Just use your hard-earned contraband to buy the weapons as you go along. You will also need to unlock some of the final perks before some weapons unlock – if you're struggling, use the 'luck of the Irish' upgrades from the black marketers.



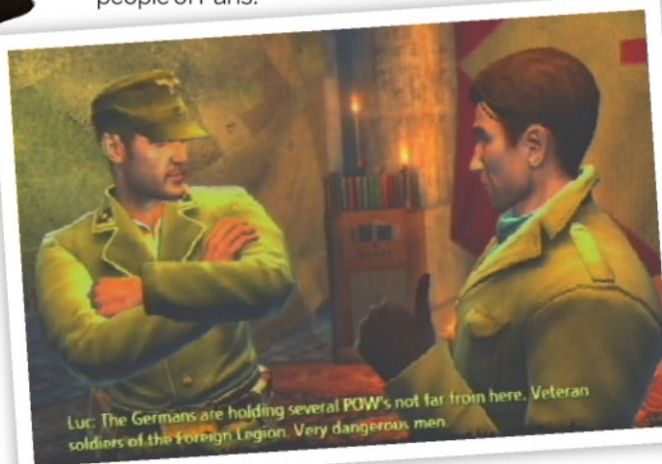
DUCK HUNT

In the countryside sections of the game you'll find small wooden barricades in large fields. These aren't initially indicated on the map, so you'll have to drive around until they are. Once there, activate the duck hunt mode. All you need to do is take part to unlock a Trophy, but you'll need to keep an eye out for the birds if you want to get a high score.



VIVA LA RESISTANCE

Most importantly, you'll spend much of your time fighting with the resistance against the Nazis. You'll have a number of rebel leaders to do missions for. The gold icons represent main storyline missions, but silver icons represent side-missions, which inevitably lead to freeing the whole of Paris from the oppression. These side missions are highly recommended if you want to unlock the Trophies devoted to inspiring the people of Paris.

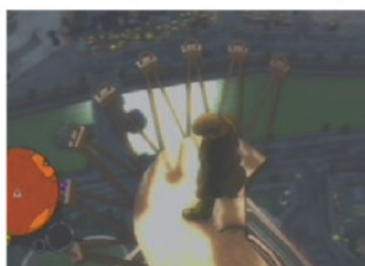


HOW TO GET... NINE BRONZE TROPHIES IN JUST A COUPLE OF HOURS!

For those Trophy hunters among you here's our handy little guide to picking up nine of the Bronze Trophies on offer in The Saboteur...

TOP O' THE WORLD BRONZE

Start by clambering onto the stone feet of any side of the Eiffel Tower then grip onto the iron struts. At the first and second levels they're thick enough that you can walk along and jump onto the next strut without much worry. On the third level, you'd be better off swinging from strut to strut until you make the top, where ladders take you the rest of the way.



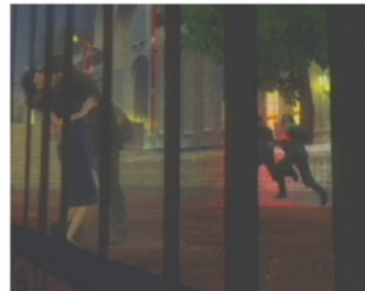
HIGH DIVER BRONZE

For this Trophy, you will want to aim for a small rounded pond near the southwest corner of the Eiffel Tower, as the river is too far away. You need to try to jump onto the barrier on the crow's nest at the top, then off towards the pond. Once in freefall, you will be able to nudge Sean closer to the pool.



CASANOVA BRONZE

The best way to do this is to find a woman suitable for a 'hiding place' (highlighted on the map as a green diamond) then get nearby Nazis to chase you. Head straight for your designated target place and press **A** to give her a kiss. The Nazis will pass by, allowing you to repeat the process. Fifty times...



CHAIN SMOKER BRONZE

For this you'll need to smoke 100 cigarettes. The quickest way to do this is to press **L3** to get Sean to light up then, as soon as he puts his lighter away, move the left stick to throw it away. Then light up again. This is cumulative, so don't worry about getting all 100 in a row if you don't want to.



WRECKING CREW BRONZE

Once you get access to the black market, acquire the map for Paris Area 1. This will highlight all the freeplay targets on your map, so head to each one and complete them. Use a disguise to pass through the restricted areas safely, and stock up on dynamite for destruction targets.



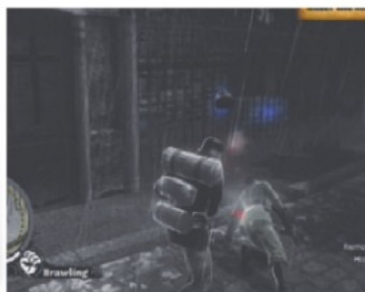
NO WITNESSES BRONZE

In the mission 'Slaughterhouse' you'll be required to sneak in and free Vittore. This is the easiest mission to get this Trophy; once you free Vittore rush to the basement of the slaughterhouse and this will unlock. Otherwise, complete any mission without raising the alarm and this will be yours.



MASTER OF DISGUISE BRONZE

For this Trophy you'll need to make sure you have a disguise before starting a mission. Acquiring one during the mission won't count. Just try to be as stealthy as possible during your missions, always taking the disguised option, and you'll get this in no time. Many of the earlier missions are more suited to a disguised method.



TRICK OR TREAT BRONZE

Generals are freeplay targets, and you will notice them from their longer trench coats. Get a disguise and work your way around to their back. Not all generals will be suitable for this, so keep your eye out for one that is perfect for a stealth kill. If you fail, try to avoid killing the general, as when he's dead he won't return.



DESTRUCTION DERBY BRONZE

This Trophy is just a matter of persistence. You'll get it halfway through the game, but if you're trying for it, be sure to keep jacking cars and attaching dynamite to them. This will allow you to avoid trouble from the Nazis while you search for your next target. Keep track of how many vehicles you have destroyed in the stats screen.



Including: Assassin's Creed II, Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, Hitman: Blood Money /// Cheats /// J'accuse

THE SECRET VAULT

A post-ironic look at the world of PlayStation cheats and Easter eggs

Assassin's
 Creed II
 Just one sea monster



Step 1: At the Visitazione church in the southern part of Venice, pull the switch above the entrance to the building.



Step 2: Go to the room with a sunken temple in it and look for a large lever on the right. Pull it and a timer will be activated.



Step 3: Go to the water's edge and stare at the water for a few minutes. Eventually a sea monster will loom into view before returning to the depths.

Call Of Duty:
 Modern
 Warfare 2
 Teddy, Aim, Fire!



Step 1: There are many teddies in *Modern Warfare 2*, but this one is particularly well hidden. It's on Act 2, Mission 2: The Hornet's Nest.



Step 2: Once you reach the chicken market keep to the left and you'll come to a little alcove off to the side.



Step 3: There's a television on top of a wicker basket in here. Shoot the screen and you'll discover a teddy bear cowering within.

Hitman: Blood
 Money
 Space Mountain?



Step 1: At the very start of the game turn around and look across the water towards the cityscape in the distance.



Step 2: Look above and to the right of the crane on the left of the island. To get a better look, whip out your binoculars.



Step 3: Now, is that a UFO? Or a mountain? Or a UFO made out of a mountain? Whatever it is, it's quite spooky and sinister.

LATEST CHEATS

Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues



PS3
 Select 'Extras' from the pause menu then 'Enter Secret Code'. Enter one of these codes then press (X). You should get a message confirming that you've activated the cheat.

Indiana Jones (Desert Disguise)	2W8QR3
Indiana Jones (Desert)	M4C34K
Indiana Jones (Kali)	J2XS97

Indiana Jones (Dinner Jacket)	QUNZUT
Indiana Jones (Officer)	3FQFKS
Willie Sallah	94RUAJ
Professor	E88YRP
Henry Jones	4C5AKH
Mutt	2GK562
Lao Che	7AWX3J
Mola Ram	82RMC2
Enemy Boxer	7EQF47
Rene Belloq	FTL48S
Dovchenko	WL4T6N
Mannequin (Man)	QPWDMM
Mannequin (Woman)	U7SMVK
Mannequin (Boy)	2UJQWC
Mannequin (Girl)	3PG5EL
Biplane	7VLKAF
Stunt Plane	RM3E84
Rolls-Royce Phantom	BC5PTY
Hot Rod	YLQ2TN
Beep Beep	UU3VSC
Coin Magnet	EGSM5B
Disguise	Y9TE98
Fast Build	SNXC2F
Fast Dig	XYAN83
Fast Fix	3Z7PJX

Fearless
 God Mode
 Ice Rink
 Poo Money
 Score x2
 Score x3
 Score x4
 Score x6
 Score x8
 Score x10
 Silhouettes
 Snake Whip
 Stud Magnet

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed – Ultimate Sith Edition

PS3
 Either select the 'Input Code' option from the pause menu any time after the first level, or go to 'Extras' then 'Enter Code'.

TUXNZF
 6JBB65
 TY9P4U
 SZFAAE
 U38VJP
 PEHHPZ
 UXGTB3
 XWJ5EY
 S5UZCP
 V7JYBU
 FQGPYH
 2U7YCV
 EGSM5B

Maximum Lightsaber throw ranks	ADEGAN
All Lightsaber crystals	HURRIKANE
Amplified Lightsaber damage	LIGHTSABER
All Force powers at maximum	KATARN
Maximum Force Push ranks	EXARKUN
Maximum Force Repulse ranks	DATHOMIR
All costumes	SOHNDANN
All databank entries	OSSUS
All talents	JOCASTA
All combos	MOLDYCROW
Mirrored levels	MINDTRICK
Sith Master difficulty	SITHSPAWN

NEW COMBOS:
 Lightsaber Impale
 Sith Saber Slash
 Aerial Assault
 Saber Sling
 Sith Saber Flurry
 Lightning Bomb
 Saber Slam
 Lightning Grenade
 Sith Saber Throw
 Aerial Ambush
 Aerial Blast



PLAY AS:
 Incinerator
 Trooper
 Kashyyk
 Trooper
 Scout Trooper
 Shadowtrooper
 Snowtrooper
 Stormtrooper
 Stormtrooper
 Commander
 Bail Organa
 Emperor
 Palpatine
 General
 Rahm Kota
 General Rahm
 Kota (drunken)
 Jedi adventure robe
 Jedi ceremonial robe
 Kento's robe
 Proxy
 Sith Stalker armor

PHOENIX
 TK421GREEN
 FERRAL
 BLACKHOLE
 SNOWMAN
 TK421WHITE
 TK421BLUE
 VICEROY
 MASTERMIND
 MANDALORE
 HARDBOILED
 HOLOCRON
 DANTOOINE
 WOOKIEE
 PROTOTYPE
 KORRIBAN

An alternative opinion about great PlayStation games that doesn't ever reflect the views of Play magazine

それはどのようによかったか。

by Cummerbund McGigachode

J'accuse!

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2

[PS3, ACTIVISION]

A modern nightmare

I could go for the jugular here: "that airport scene was crass!" I'd bellow, like an idealistic mentalist. "You were killing identical character models in a really silly videogame!", you might respond, blinking out of sync and undoubtedly crapping in some kind of nervous rage. Well, let's shun that for a sec – *Modern Warfare 2* has countless other issues that need to be shaken out of the tree first, like the mischievous chimps they are.

The single-player is mainly composed of pure self-indulgence on Infinity Ward's part. Just because it sounded cool to have Washington overcast by a nuclear cloud without an ounce of explanation, the effect on the player is one of immediate confusion; I jumped straight on to Wikipedia to see if my copy of the game had given me the finger and removed an essential cut-scene, but no, any straightforward explanation fell victim to Infinity Ward's bid to create the most incoherent and nonsensical military tale imaginable. Turns out I had to wait two missions to put it all together,

and even then it was as easy to decipher as a sudoku puzzle where some prick has inexplicably filled in every space with a perturbed smile.

True, flashes of brilliance are there. Aping *Mirror's Edge* in the Rio level, admiring the stirring masculinity of Soap 'I'm blatantly Kevin McKidd' MacTavish; these are all well and good, and I permit them to coexist in my domain. It's the barmy story that gets me, and the often poisonous effect it has on the logistics of level design and their

If you're wondering why I haven't complained about *Modern Warfare 2*'s multiplayer yet, that's because it's amazing

impact on the player. Seriously, the space scene was one 'Houston, we have a problem' away from sending players, the world over, into a default coma of brutal embarrassment.

Let's not forget the daft contrivances at the centre of the missions, either, particularly the SAS one where you have to protect the computer from waves of disorganised cretins – what the hell did Makarov

● Burger Town, for us, at least, was blatant false advertising.



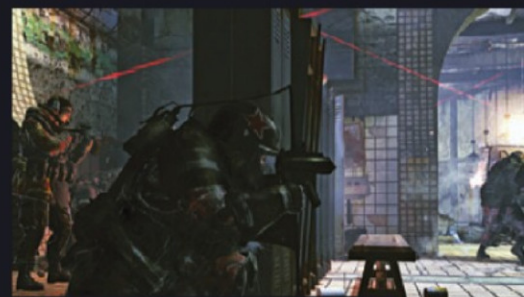
have on his computer that was taking so damn long to transfer? HD MPEGs of classic hostage situations? A montage of his airport antics set to the *A-Team* theme tune? Clearly, *Modern Warfare 2* takes place in a nightmare reality where USB 2.0 is but the fever dream of a madman.

Oh, and if you're wondering why I haven't complained about *Modern Warfare 2*'s

multiplayer yet, that's because it's amazing. Apart from the nukes, of course – what a stupid idea.

So, back to the airport scene or 'that scene', as it's been dubbed by irritating onlookers. When your only defence for a terrifying scenario of that nature is 'at least there weren't any kids there', something has gone very wrong. Still, at least there weren't any kids there.

● Well done, you set a level in space. Other high-concept setting suggestions: the Earth's core, Asda, the inside of a toilet...



● This sequence ends with the triumphant return of Captain Price, of course. Shortly thereafter, the plot collapses in on itself.

Quiz answers

- 1) Ulala
- 2) Crash Bandicoot
- 3) Bayonetta
- 4) AiAi
- 5) Fahrenheit

- 6) Pandemonium
- 7) Broken Sword
- 8) Guitar Hero
- 9) Vandal Hearts
- 10) Time Crisis

- 11) Dreamcast
- 12) GameCube
- 13) Saturn
- 14) Xbox
- 15) Wii

- 16) Doom
- 17) Silent Hill
- 18) Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
- 19) Resident Evil
- 20) Hitman

Results:

As Christmas has recently been and gone let's rate your effort according to desirable/undesirable presents.

- 0) Coal
- 1-5) Socks
- 6-10) Books
- 11-15) PSPgo
- 16-20) PS3 Slim

PLAY⁴ PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

PLAY⁴ TOP FIVE MINIGAMES

top five KEITH HENNESSEY

- 1 Monkeys (MGS 3)
- 2 Ring Run (Sonic 2)
- 3 Forklifts (Shenmue)
- 4 Lady Love (God Of War 2)
- 5 Ragdoll Olympics (Flatout 2)

top five GAVIN MACKENZIE

- 1 Uncle Launcher (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 2 Oh No! The Bomb's Gonna Explode (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 3 Hyper Pie Throw (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 4 Juggler Panic! (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 5 Just Circle What's Correct (Bishi Bashi Special)

top five JON GORDON

- 1 Monkey Target (Super Monkey Ball 2)
- 2 Darts (GTA IV)
- 3 Bonus Round (Street Fighter II)
- 4 Homerun Pinball (The Bigs 2)
- 5 Time Trials (Mirror's Edge)

top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Hyper pie throw (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 2 G Bike (Final Fantasy VII)
- 3 Angel Attack (Bayonetta)
- 4 The Arena (FIFA 10)
- 5 Perm Mani (Bishi Bashi Special)

top five ALI INNES

- 1 Puzzle Kombat (Mortal Kombat: Destruction)
- 2 Monkey Target (Super Monkey Ball 2)
- 3 Quarters (Leisure Suit Larry)
- 4 Aqua Grabber (Club Penguin)
- 5 Monster Catastrophe (Bishi Bashi Special)

top five DAN PEEL

- 1 Pool (GTA IV)
- 2 Bonus Round (Street Fighter II)
- 3 Rod Shaker (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 4 Prepare Me Some Burgers (Bishi Bashi Special)
- 5 Facial Slot Machine (Bishi Bashi Special)

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue*	183	90%
The combo system is so rich and deep that just learning one character will take you months. Arguably the studio's best work to date.		
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%

game	issue	score
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.		
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over Sega Rally.		
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dead Space	172	87%
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Tough and unforgiving, Demon's Souls is nevertheless a breath of fresh air in a very stagnant games market.		
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%

game	issue	score
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
The most recent Tiger Woods game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because Everybody's Golf is bloody brilliant.		
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by PES seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		

Peripherals

Exspect Hemp PSP Cases

Price: £9.99

Not only is hemp a hippy's best friend but it can also be used to make clothes, blankets and now PSP cases. This new range of officially licensed accessories from Exspect are made from 100 per cent recyclable materials and come in two different varieties, one to fit the PSPgo and the other for the beefier PSP-3000 and the Slim & Lite. It keeps the PSP safe and scratch-free without adding too much bulk. The larger iteration has a handy pull strap so you can get to the PSP extra fast. The smaller sibling boasts a cutout on the back so the PSPgo logo is visible even inside the case. ★★★★★



Vertical Slim Stand

Price: £8.99

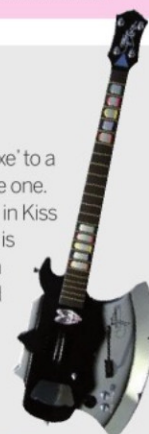
Anyone who's recently traded their old PS3 in for a slimmer model will have noticed numerous differences between the two consoles, one of the major distinctions being that the Slim does not like to stand upright – a problem for anyone who used to have their console squeezed into a tight space. Now peripheral maker Kamikaze Gear is attempting to rectify the situation with this simple piece of plastic that allows the Slim to stand straight and narrow. ★★★★★



Gene Simmons Axe

Price: \$79.99 (Approx £50)

Currently only available in the US this takes the term 'axe' to a whole new level as this peripheral is actually shaped like one. Modelled on the one rock-legend Gene Simmons uses in Kiss it comes with the Demon's personal seal of approval. It is bigger than traditional guitar controllers but also feels a bit cheaper when compared to some of the higher-end models out there. Appearance wins over performance here so it might serve better as a display piece or secondary axe rather than something that will let you rock all night and party every day. ★★★★★



Street Fighter IV FightPad

Price: £34.99

Dedicated Street Fighter players swear by their arcade sticks but now Madcatz has introduced these new FightPads. It states that these PS3 controllers were designed specifically for fighting game fans and offer new levels of control and precision. A new enlarged eight-way circular D-pad and classic six-button layout has been implemented and rubber grips make for improved handling. ★★★★★









This month's new entries

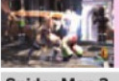





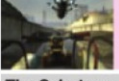
The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

The Saboteur PS3	67%
Bayonetta* PS3	93%
Lego Rock Band PS3	75%
Band Hero PS3	68%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game PS3	64%
F1 2009 PSP	66%
Tekken 6 PSP	90%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier PSP	59%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines PSP	77%
Football Manager Handheld 2010 PSP	60%
Invizimals PSP	71%

Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron PSP	65%
Lego Indiana Jones 2:	
The Adventure Continues PS3	71%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja 5 PS2	59%
Agarest: Generations Of War PS3	78%
PixelJunk Shooter PSN	93%
Metal Gear Solid PSN	93%
Heavy Weapon PSN	75%
Hasbro Family Game Night PSN	60%
Gravity Crash PSN	85%

game	issue	score
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
 World Tour just about manages to trump rival Rock Band with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
 Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Lair	158	52%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
 Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
 Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
 A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotorStorm	151	92%
 With the addition of an online multiplayer, MotorStorm gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen.		

game	issue	score
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
 With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, Pacific Rift amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2009	172	80%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	159	70%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	185	72%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
 Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%

game	issue	score
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
 Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil Soul Calibur IV. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
 The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Tekken 6	184	94%
 There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops Tekken 6 from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
 It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
 This unique FPS combines the best bits of Mafia and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements.		
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
 This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, Oblivion is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
 Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. Absolutely nothing.		
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%

*denotes import review

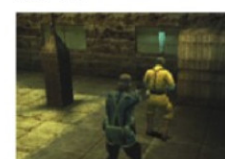
psp top fives

top five RACING



- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 Gran Turismo
- 3 Ridge Racer
- 4 WipEout Pure
- 5 Sega Rally

top five SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 2 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
- 3 Pursuit Force
- 4 Miami Vice
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 2
- 3 FIFA 10
- 4 Football Manager Handheld
- 5 WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010

top five RPG



- 1 Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness
- 2 Crisis Core - FFRemix
- 3 Tales Of Eternia
- 4 Breath Of Fire 3
- 5 Valkyrie Profile

top five PLATFORM



- 1 LocoRoco
- 2 Metal Slug Anthology
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins
- 5 Me And My Katamari

PS3 top fives

top five FPS



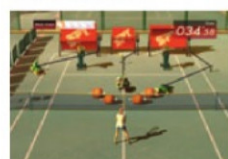
- 1 Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Orange Box
- 3 Killzone 2
- 4 Unreal Tournament III
- 5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

top five RACING



- 1 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
- 2 Sega Rally
- 3 Colin McRae: DiRT
- 4 Colin McRae DiRT 2
- 5 Need For Speed ProStreet

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 5
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 FIFA 10

top five ADVENTURE



- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- 3 Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- 4 Assassin's Creed 2
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4

top five SHOOT-EM-UP



- 1 The Club
- 2 GRAW 2
- 3 Super Stardust HD
- 4 Everyday Shooter
- 5 Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

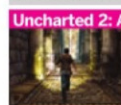
game issue score

UFC Undisputed 2009 180 90%



Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.

Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 161 87%



Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 185 96%

Unreal Tournament III 162 88%

Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom 151 54%

Valkyria Chronicles 173 82%

Viking: Battle For Asgard 165 74%

Virtua Fighter 5 151 83%

Virtua Tennis 2009 180 80%

Virtua Tennis 3 150 91%



Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.

Wanted: Weapons Of Fate 179 63%

Warhawk 157 84%

Watchmen: The End Is Nigh 183 55%

Wet 184 41%

Wheelman 178 72%

Wolfenstein 183 72%

World Snooker Championship 2007 151 56%

WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship 177 67%

WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania 178 80%

WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008 159 88%

WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009 173 74%

WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010 185 77%

Yakuza 3* 178 82%

X-Blades 178 54%

X-Men Origins: Wolverine 179 71%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike 170 74%

3-On-3 NHL Arcade 177 62%

Age Of Booty 172 81%

Battlefield 1943 182 89%

Bishi Bashi Special! 175 61%

Bionic Commando Rearmed 169 88%

Blast Factor 152 72%

Bombberman Ultra 185 82%

Burn Zombie Burn 178 85%

Calling All Cars 155 81%

Comet Crash 186 84%

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 168 70%

Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation 176 55%

Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge 185 68%

Command & Conquer 175 44%

Cool Boarders 173 57%

Cool Boarders 2 175 31%

Crash Bandicoot 172 77%

Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped 174 82%

Crash Commando 174 80%

Crash Team Racing 170 79%

Crystal Defenders 184 48%

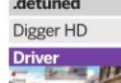
Dark Mist 164 53%

Destruction Derby 01 80%

.detuned 186 50%

Digger HD 186 52%

Driver 171 90%



With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, *Driver* made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.

Droplitz 184 91%



Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends Rez-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.

echochrome 169 85%

Elefunk 170 45%

Everybody's Golf 2 62 83%

Fade To Black 09 44%

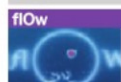
Fat Princess 183 65%

Fatal Inertia EX 168 65%

FIFA 09 Ultimate Team 178 61%

game issue score

Flock! 179 70%



Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. *f!Ow* is an innovative title available on the Network.

f!Ow 151 90%

Flower 176 85%

G-Police 27 84%

Geon 175 71%

Go! Puzzle 152 58%

Gran Turismo HD 150 75%

Gravity Crash 187 85%

GTI Club+ 174 72%

Hardcore 4x4 15 81%

Hasbro Family Game Night 187 60%

Heavy Weapon 187 75%

High Velocity Bowling 163 50%

Hi-Octane 178 64%

International Track & Field 171 80%

Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos 185 48%

Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao 185 70%

Jet Rider 2 176 71%

Judge Dredd 18 19%

Jumping Flash 172 55%

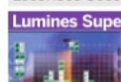
Kula World 172 71%

Lemmings 151 79%

Linger In Shadows 173 69%

LocoRoco Cocoreccho! 159 80%

Lumines Supernova 178 90%



Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.

Marvel Vs Capcom 2 182 90%



This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.

MediEvil 173 45%

Mega Man 9 172 75%

Metal Gear Solid 187 93%



While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.

Metal Gear Solid Online 175 45%

Motorhead 173 60%

Noby Noby Boy 177 85%

Nucleus 155 82%

Numblast 183 60%

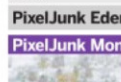
N20 37 70%

OutRun Online Arcade 180 80%

Pain 183 69%

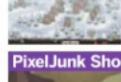
PixelJunk Eden 169 67%

PixelJunk Monsters 163 94%



The second game in the *PixelJunk* series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!

PixelJunk Shooter 187 93%



Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its *PixelJunk* series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.

Piyotama 162 62%

Populous: The Beginning 46 70%

Prince Of Persia Classic 173 67%

Q*bert 58 53%

Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic 179 83%

Rampage: World Tour 29 77%

Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty 170 69%

Rayman 01 76%

Riff: Everyday Shooter 162 86%

Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil 165 63%

Savage Moon 175 87%

Shatter 183 91%

Sheep 171 78%

Siren Blood Curse 170 62%

Smash Cars 184 50%

SOCOM Confrontation 178 55%

Spin Jam 174 32%

Syphon Filter 48 93%



Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.

game issue score

Snakeball 176 92%

Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream 159 57%

Street Skater 2 178 40%

Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix 168 78%

Super Rub-A-Dub 151 83%

Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars 177 65%

Super Stardust HD 155 74%

Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix 176 72%

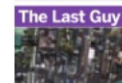
Syphon Filter 3 170 80%

Tank Battles 186 68%

Tekken HD 150 80%

Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online 161 87%

The Last Guy 171 91%



Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. *The Last Guy* is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.

The Punisher: No Mercy 182 49%

Theme Hospital 32 80%

Theme Park 174 80%

TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled 186 57%

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 54 34%

Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds 183 61%

ToyHome 162 31%

Trials Of Topaq 159 50%

Trine 184 85%

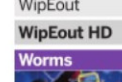
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star 171 80%

Watchmen: The End Is Nigh 183 55%

WipEout 01 89%

WipEout HD 172 84%

Worms 179 91%



There's a reason *Worms* is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.

Zuma 182 78%

PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc 186 68%

Bloons 186 65%

Brainpipe 186 70%

BreakQuest 186 45%

Field Runners 186 85%

Fortix 186 57%

Funky Punch 186 49%

Hero of Sparta 186 57%

Kahoots 186 88%

Pinball Fantasies 186 90%



It's like having an Amiga on your PSP, meaning it's brilliant even without the fact that the game is great.

Puzzle Scape 186 75%

Tetris 186 93%



How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.

Vampire 186 67%

PSP LISTING



300: March To Glory 152 59%

Ace Combat X 147 72%

After Burner: Black Falcon 152 82%

Ape Academy 134 44%

Ape Academy 2 145 52%

Ape Escape P 140 37%

Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines 187 77%

Astonishia Story 142 68%

Beaterator 186 72%

Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light 145 45%

Blood Bowl 184 53%

Bombberman 150 83%

Boulder Dash: Rocks! 165 69%

Breath Of Fire III 138 82%

Brothers In Arms: D-Day 149 69%

Burnout Dominator 153 65%

game issue score

Burnout Legends 134 94%Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, *Legends* is the best racing game on the PSP.

Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%

Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness 161 92%

An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.

Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%

Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars 185 95%Bar some combat control issues, *GTA: Chinatown Wars* has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.**GTA: Liberty City Stories** 135 95%Successfully taking the *GTA* formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.**GTA: Vice City Stories** 147 96%Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way *Vice City Stories* could be topped is if *San Andreas* comes to the PSP.

Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%

game issue score

Lemmings 138 63%

Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.

LocoRoco 143 94%

We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.

LocoRoco 2 173 82%

LocoRoco Midnight Carnival 186 81%

Lumines II 137 74%

Madden NFL 06 137 74%

Marvel Trading Cards 155 38%

Me And My Katamari 138 86%

Medal Of Honor Heroes 147 72%

Medieval Resurrection 134 53%

Mercury Meltdown 145 66%**Metal Slug Anthology** 150 91%We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our *Metal Slug* and the *Anthology* proves to be a great compilation.**Metal Gear Acid 2** 138 92%

More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops 150 91%A proper *Metal Gear Solid* game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.

Miami Vice 144 82%

Micro Machines V4 142 71%

Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition 134 57%

Monster Hunter Freedom 140 81%

Monster Hunter Freedom 2 157 59%

Monster Hunter Freedom Unite 181 77%

MotoGP 146 75%

Motorstorm: Arctic Edge 184 72%

Mytran Wars 179 85%

Namco Museum Battle Collection 136 68%

Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising 185 46%

Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2 169 46%

NBA Ballers: Rebound 139 61%

Need For Speed Undercover 175 57%

Need For Speed Most Wanted 136 73%

OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast 139 93%

The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

PaRappa The Rapper 155 88%

Patapon 163 86%

Patapon 2 177 87%

Pirates Of The Caribbean 143 52%

PixelJunk Monster Deluxe 185 86%

Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 163 77%

Pocket Racers 144 49%

PoPoLoCrois 142 71%

Power Stone Collection 145 88%

PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient 141 52%

Prince Of Persia Revelations 138 69%

Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero? 181 80%

PSN Collection: Power Pack 173 70%

PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack 173 54%

Pursuit Force 134 83%

Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice 159 76%

Puzzle Quest 153 66%

R-Type Tactics 170 74%

Rainbow Six Vegas 156 78%

Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters 154 78%

Rengoku 2 144 72%

Resistance: Retribution 177 76%

Ridge Racer 2 145 78%Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, *Ridge Racer* still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.**Rock Band Unplugged** 181 92%*Unplugged* comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.

game issue score

Rocky Balboa 150 68%

Secret Agent Clank 169 79%

Sega Mega Drive Collection 177 79%**Sega Rally** 158 90%

Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.

Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja 150 60%

Silent Hill Origins 160 87%

Smash Court Tennis 154 58%

SOCOM Fire Team 2 154 70%

SOCOM: Tactical Strike 160 85%

SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 140 69%

Sonic Rivals 147 70%

Sonic Rivals 2 162 35%

Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny 183 92%

New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.

Spider-Man 3 162 32%

Spinout 149 81%

Splinter Cell: Essentials 139 71%

SSX On Tour 138 76%

Star Ocean: Second Evolution 178 78%

Star Trek: Tactical Assault 148 59%

Star Wars Battlefront II 137 74%

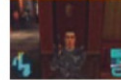
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron 187 65%

Star Wars: Lethal Alliance 148 69%

Star Wars: Renegade Squadron 160 78%

Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max 138 70%

Street Riders 140 29%

Super Monkey Ball Adventure 142 54%**Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror** 140 90%In the absence of a 'real' *Metal Gear* game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.

Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow 161 84%

Tales Of Eternia 138 85%

Tales Of The World 158 56%

Taito Legends 145 64%**Tekken 6** 187 90%Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, *Tekken 6* is the best game of the series on PSP.**Tekken: Dark Resurrection** 143 92%*Tekken: Dark Resurrection* is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.

Tenchu: Shadow Assassins 179 71%

Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins 146 51%

The Con 153 59%

The Cube 153 64%

The Godfather Mob Wars 136 66%

The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics 136 66%

The Sims 2 137 71%

TOCA 3 152 70%

Tokobot 140 79%

Tomb Raider: Anniversary 156 81%

Tomb Raider: Legend 140 72%

Twisted Metal Head-On 134 54%

Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins 145 88%

Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code 140 59%

Valhalla Knights 158 49%

Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth 153 78%

Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble 140 82%

Virtua Tennis 3 152 88%

Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command 161 70%

WipeOut Pulse 159 86%**WipeOut Pure** 138 91%Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld *WipeOut* game could be, *Pure* is an essential PSP purchase.

World Of Pool 156 43%

World Tour Poker 141 67%

World Tour Soccer 2 142 40%

Worms: Open Warfare 2 157 80%

WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006 137 84%

WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007 147 80%

World Rally Championship 134 67%

*denotes import review

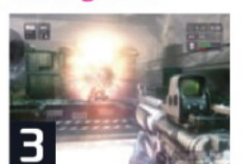
TOP TEN NETWORK GAMES



1 Modern Warfare 2



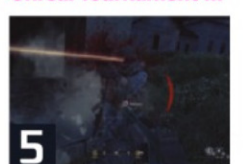
2 LittleBigPlanet



3 Killzone 2



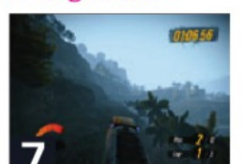
4 Unreal Tournament III



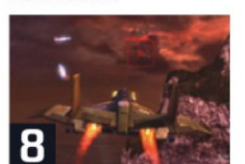
5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



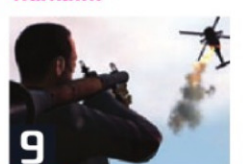
6 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



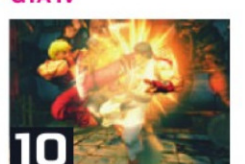
7 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift



8 Warhawk



9 GTA IV



10 Street Fighter IV

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SURROGATES //
DOCTOR WHO //
DEATH NOTE //
SHORTS //
THIRST //
AVATAR //

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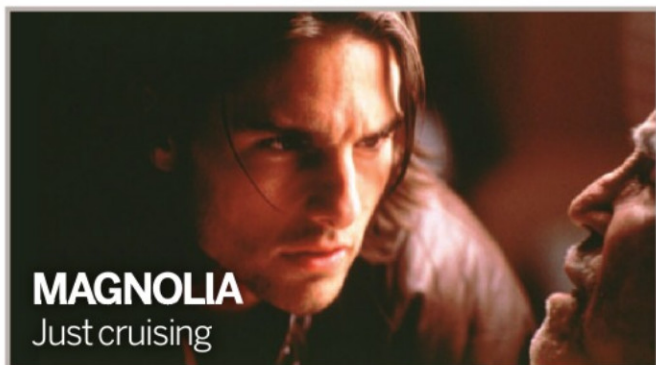
INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

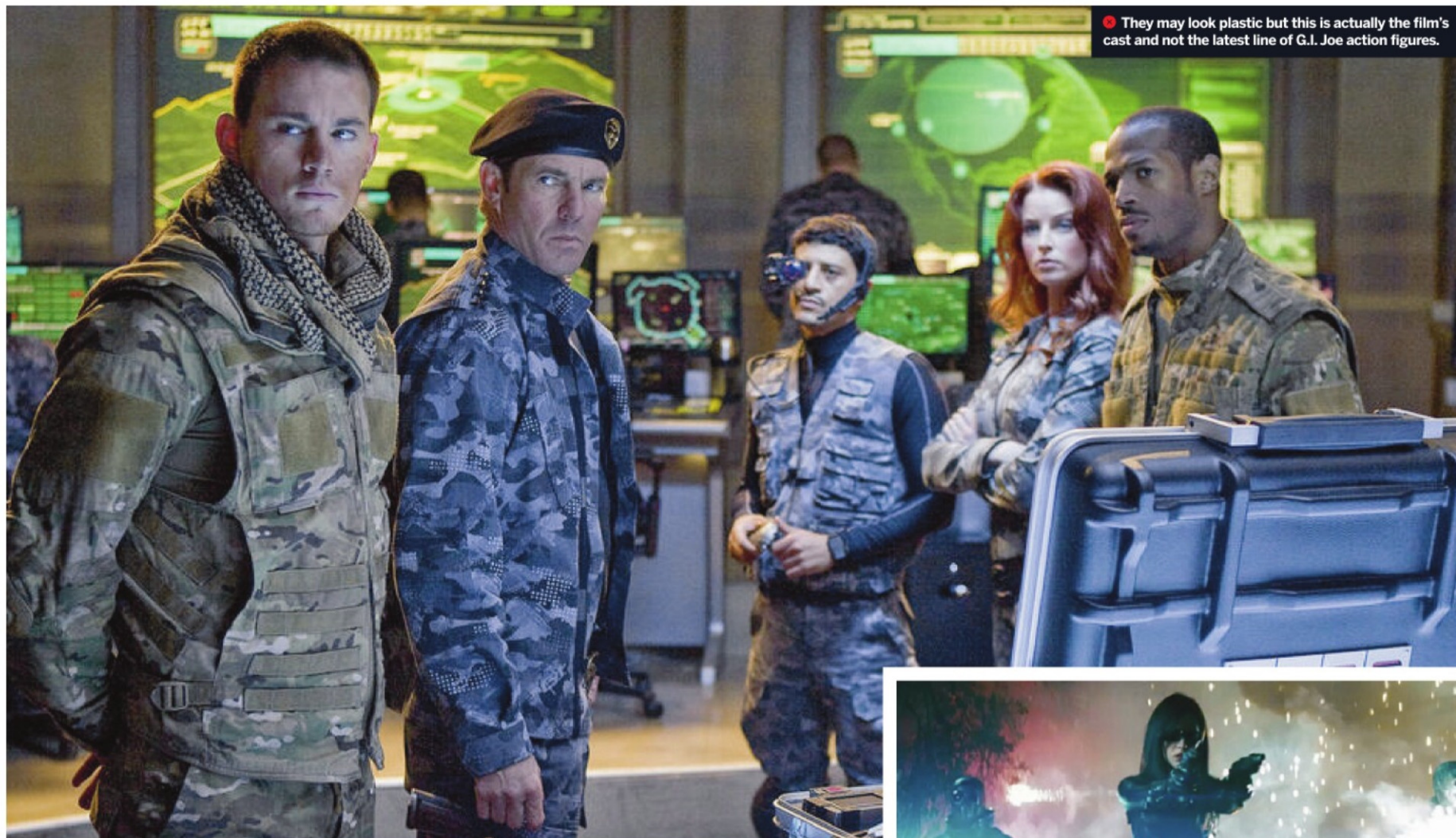
It's death or inglorious for Tarantino's Basterds

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● They may look plastic but this is actually the film's cast and not the latest line of G.I. Joe action figures.



DETAILS

Price
£26.99
Sound
TrueHD 5.1
Director
Stephen Sommers
Starring
Dennis Quaid,
Sienna Miller,
Channing Tatum

G.I. Joe

Worse than your average Joe

Like it or not, the quality of summer blockbusters is seriously affected by an industry that should have sod all say in the matter. The industry in question is the collectables market. It's one of the reasons there are always so many new characters in big-budget sequels (we'd cite the amount of bad guys in *Spider-Man 3* as an example but we can't count that high); the more characters there are, the more toys you can have, the more money you can make. This commercial connection is never more apparent

than it is in some of the more recent explosion-fests, namely *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe*, two films that have spawned from extremely successful toy lines.

Of course, having a character roster full of toy-friendly models doesn't necessarily have to be a disadvantage, it's just that so far it has worked out that way. And it's a trend that reached a new nadir with the release of this rather stupid toy line spin-off. Make no mistake, this is the cinematic equivalent of your mum pouring a box of Lego over your head and then telling you to clean it up.

Following a team of ridiculously dressed super-soldiers as they combat the threat of equally ridiculously dressed super-terrorists, *G.I. Joe* is so excruciatingly bad it can be fairly compared to the likes of *Batman & Robin*. The acting is of the worst sort imaginable, with the cast not sure if they're in a parody or an advert for gym membership, while



the special effects – typically a selling point for a film like this, and what should offer respite from the ill-judged pace and tone – are ugly enough to make us wonder whether they were edited on an iPhone.

Obviously, expectations can only be so high when watching a film about action figures that's directed by *Van Helsing*'s helmer, but there is still a real sense of disappointment here. Brainless action films do, at a push, have their place but this offers so little in the areas it should excel in – namely, set pieces – that it will have you revisiting films you've previously labelled as awful with a renewed zeal. Quite how a big studio film like this one was allowed to be as bad as this is beyond us; this is genuinely such a depressing experience that it had us seriously contemplating slowly melting our collectables over a birthday candle.

Aaron Asadi

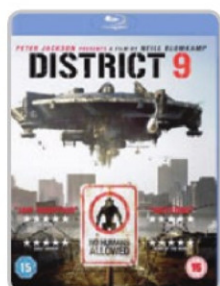
VERDICT

Action figures might not be the best starting point for a movie but we're sure something better could have been made of the famous toy line than this dire, dire film.

RATING: ★★★★★



● Even as a shallow action movie *G.I. Joe* is a huge disappointment.



District 9

Enclosed encounters of the third kind

IT'S NOT OFTEN that we're surprised by a special effects-oriented flick. Indeed, such occasions are so few that it's genuinely hard to remember the last time it happened; when we first saw *The Matrix* maybe. Now while this South Africa-set sci-fi thriller isn't in the same league as the Wachowskis' bullet-time-ridden opus in terms of quality, it certainly caught us off guard in similar fashion.

The film begins as a mockumentary following a field operative going about his duties patrolling slums designed to house aliens who landed on Earth nearly three decades prior. Initially part-media satire and part-Apartheid allegory, the tale soon shifts gear into ultra-taut thriller with our awkward hero on the run from aggressive government officials amidst the very district he's policed for so long. It's entertaining stuff, too, with the film moving along at a swift pace and enough cool effects littered along the way to widen the eyes.

The problem is that the film can't match its uniqueness with quality. It is unquestionably a good film, especially compared to some of the drivel that's recently reared its head, but sadly it doesn't



● Vikus attempts to force the 'Prawns' from their homes.

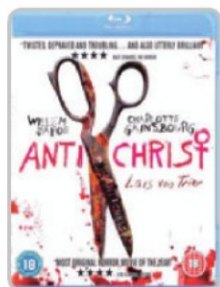
ever excel in any one area. As an action movie it doesn't offer big or exciting enough set pieces and although the special effects are decent there's little we haven't seen before. It's important to emphasise, too, that this is an action film with substance, not the other way round. If it was to be judged as such, it would seem even weaker.

Still, almost totally by virtue of its uniqueness, *District 9* comes highly recommended. It may have some obvious shortcomings but for the most part it's inarguably refreshing in tone and ambition. **AA**

RATING: ★★★★★

DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Neill Blomkamp
Starring
Sharlto Copley,
David James, Jason
Cope



Antichrist

Cutting modern horror

WHERE TO BEGIN: the now infamous scene featuring a bloody ejaculation and female castration might seem like the ideal jumping on point for a review of Lars Von Trier's intense, moody horror about two grieving parents but as that takes up a mere fraction of the running time (and therefore a disproportionate amount of the criticism), that would hardly seem fair.

More deserving of commentary is the disturbing atmosphere Von Trier so brilliantly creates, punctuating his protagonist's dark depression with one striking image after another, channeling a feeling of desperate uneasiness from the likes of Friedkin's *Exorcist*. It's sadly all too rare a thing to experience a horror that's as uncomfortable to watch as this one, so for the most part it's tempting to overlook the film's shortcomings to recommend it as a more daring and interesting alternative to the *Hostels* and *Saws* that dominate cinemas all year round.

Chief among *Antichrist*'s said shortcomings is the slightness of the story. With only two characters



● Only two characters feature in Von Trier's disturbing horror.

featured it's incredibly difficult for the director to really explore his themes in a variety of ways and even more difficult for the film to develop any real weight or drama. As an exercise in atmosphere and style it is one of the better horrors we've seen in recent years but in terms of offering anything more directly engaging, the film is too limited in its structure and plot. **AA**

RATING: ★★★★★

DETAILS

Price
£19.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Lars Von Trier
Starring
Willem Dafoe,
Charlotte
Gainsbourg



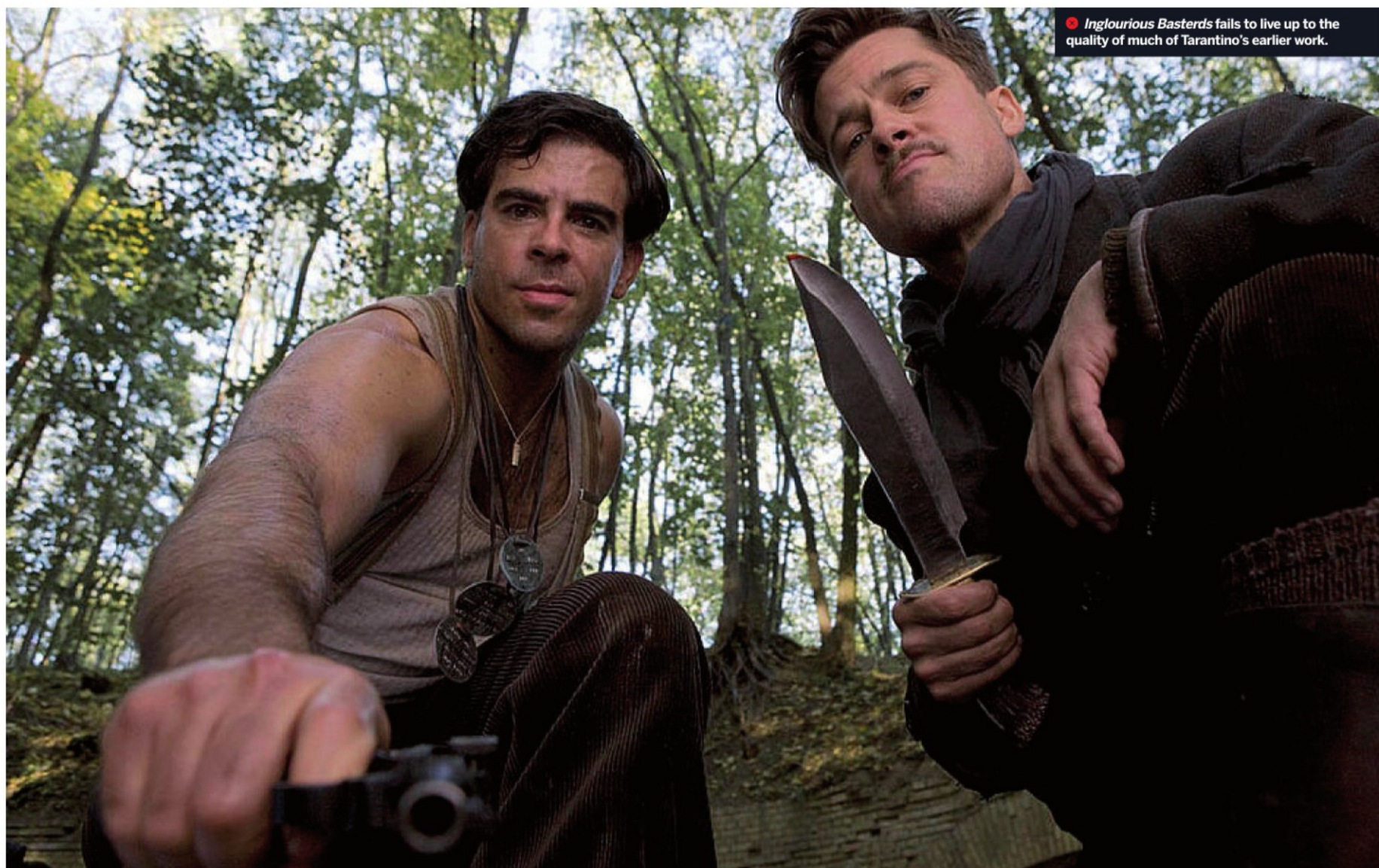
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- 1** **Horton Hears A Who!**
A criminally overlooked animation. Terrific stuff.
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WEBSITE: play.com
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A superb action film from Mel Gibson.
PRICE: £7.99
WEBSITE: hmv.com



Coming soon

- 1** **Up**
Pixar may have slipped up with this effort but there's always excitement surrounding a Blu-ray release from the usually excellent studio.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 2** **Michael Jackson: This Is It**
Rehearsals cut together try to substitute for a concert that would never be. This should be intriguing.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 3** **Fantastic Mr Fox**
From the director of *Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *Life Aquatic* comes a stop-motion Roald Dahl adaptation.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 4** **The Invention Of Lying**
A Ricky Gervais comedy that might find a more welcoming audience on Blu-ray than it did at cinemas.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★
- 5** **Magnolia**
A supremely ambitious effort from the master filmmaker that is Paul Thomas Anderson. Worth seeing for Tom Cruise alone.
ANTICIPATION: ★★★★★



● *Inglourious Basterds* fails to live up to the quality of much of Tarantino's earlier work.



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Quentin Tarantino
Starring
Brad Pitt, Eli Roth,
Christoph Waltz

Inglourious Basterds

Tarantino returns to form... for a couple of scenes

It will be nothing short of tragic if *Pulp Fiction* turns out to be the pinnacle of Quentin Tarantino's career. Five films and 15 years on from his comic masterpiece, though, and the director who burst onto the scene with *Reservoir Dogs* now seems even further away than ever from recapturing the genius of his early work, let alone improving upon it. His latest effort comes in the form

Inglourious Basterds is not a consistent failure in the way that *Kill Bill Vol. 2* or *Deathproof* are

of a World War II tale, the much mooted *Inglourious Basterds*, which, despite offering the odd glimpse of brilliance, is too easily distracted by its lesser ideas to be considered anything more than another disappointment.

Inglourious Basterds, however, is not a consistent failure in the way that *Kill Bill Vol. 2* or *Deathproof* are. Indeed the movie starts off with a scene that boasts all the qualities

of classic Sergio Leone, with a Nazi officer, nicknamed the Jew Hunter, having a thrilling and tense stand-off with a French farmer. By the end of this opening chapter not only are hopes high that Tarantino has finally started making films again instead of telling jokes but that an emotive and engaging plot thread about a young, orphaned Jewish lady who escapes the murder of her family will form

the crux of what's to follow. One scene later, though, and all hopes are dashed; as soon as the *Basterds* are introduced in the corniest of manners it's clear that

Tarantino has no intention of making anything other than a war movie infused with all the cinematic slang he's become famous for. That he should choose to focus on these Nazi-scalping clowns and use a tale of the exiled orphan who runs a cinema and forms a relationship with a heroic German soldier as nothing more than a backdrop should speak volumes about the misguided ambition. It is



● Good in places, but a disappointment overall.

the cinematic equivalent of looking for copper in a gold mine.

Tonally, the movie shifts about like an itchy bum on a church pew, with one moment stern and beautiful and the next wild and cartoonish. There's real quality here, but when the style of film flits so often from one kind to the next the quality is irreparably damaged.

Aaron Asadi

VERDICT

There are bright glimpses of Tarantino's talent here but this is still a massively flawed project that disappoints far more than it impresses.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Stardust

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: DTS-HD
DIRECTOR: Matthew Vaughn
STARRING: Charlie Cox, Claire Danes, Robert de Niro



AS FUN AS it is to see Neil Gaiman's imagination unleashed up on the big screen in the shape of a comic fairytale, *Stardust* was perhaps met with slightly too warm a reception when it was originally released. It is a thoroughly charming adventure full of witches, ghouls, flying pirates and dashing heroes but unfortunately it's never anything more than that, lacking the drama, wit and set pieces to achieve a more spectacular result. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

Magnolia

PRICE: £14.99
SOUND: TrueHD
DIRECTOR: Paul Thomas Anderson
STARRING: Tom Cruise, Philip Seymour Hoffman, William H Macy



SINCE MAKING THIS hugely ambitious drama about intersecting lives in the San Fernando Valley, director Paul Thomas Anderson has gone on to make two wonderful, if totally different films but it's arguably this Altman-esque ensemble piece that he is most renowned for. There are worse fates, though, as any filmmaker would be proud to be so closely attached to this swirling, moving, funny, smart and evocative film. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

The Proposition

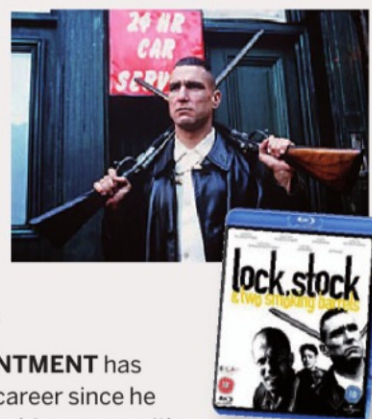
PRICE: £22.99
SOUND: DTS-HD
DIRECTOR: John Hillcoat
STARRING: Guy Pearce, Danny Huston, Ray Winstone



IT'S A RARE thing to see a Western that offers something a little different and a rarer thing still to see a Western that offers something different and presents it with some considerable style, as *The Proposition* does. Set in the outback and following the trials of a criminal forced to hunt down his dangerous elder sibling, this is a film with a distinctive personality as well as some remarkable twists and turns. A must for those who have lost faith in the genre. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: DTS-HD
DIRECTOR: Guy Ritchie
STARRING: Nick Moran, Jason Statham, Vinnie Jones



SO MUCH DISAPPOINTMENT has followed Guy Ritchie's career since he gunned his way onto the big screen with this crime caper that all the promise it showed has been irrevocably damaged. It's still a fun film with larger-than-life characters and a well-pitched tone but ultimately it's hard to watch with the dark clouds of *Revolver*, *Swept Away* and *RocknRolla* hanging overhead. **AA**
RATING: ★★★★★

Charts

UK Top 5

- Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen**
 It's number one, but is one of the worst films of the Noughties.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Coraline**
 The adaptation of the Neil Gaiman tale may look the part but it has very little else going for it.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Inglourious Basterds**
 There are some great moments in this WWII romp but as a whole it's a disappointing mess.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Band Of Brothers**
 This gritty, stirring World War II series has never looked better. Epic viewing that's worthwhile.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Star Trek**
 JJ Abrams pulled this franchise reboot out of the bag with considerable style and humour.
RATING: ★★★★★

US Top 5

- The Hangover**
 This comedy from the director of *Old School* deserves to be top of the charts. Funny stuff.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Inglourious Basterds**
 Tarantino bounced back from the commercial failure of *Deathproof* and rides high with his *Basterds*.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Star Trek**
 If Chris Pine was any more charming, we're not sure we could handle it. It's a fun film, too.
RATING: ★★★★★
- District 9**
 If this wasn't such a disjointed film it might scrape a higher mark. As it is, though, it's a mediocre surprise.
RATING: ★★★★★
- Harry Potter & The Half-Blood Prince**
 The sooner the *Harry Potter* series comes to an end, the better.
RATING: ★★★★★

Top 5 Clint Eastwood

- Unforgiven**
 One of the best Westerns of all time, and considering the wealth of them that's quite a recommendation.
- Letters From Iwo Jima**
 By telling this WWII drama from the perspective of the Japanese, Clint proved himself a brave and exciting director.
- Changeling**
 A thoroughly good movie about police corruption and the birth of modern media influence in Los Angeles.
- Gran Torino**
 Although less challenging than some of his other movies, this film about an embittered widower still has value.
- Million Dollar Baby**
 Nothing like the film everyone thought it would be, this evocative movie deals with some remarkably tough issues.

HD Reviews

TVs and sound systems that'll make your gaming come to life



Sony BRAVIA KDL-46Z5800
PRICE: £1,499
SCREEN SIZE: 46in
RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080
DIMENSIONS: 1,091 x 672 x 86

SONY HAS DONE its best to lead the HD market and although it's been overtaken in some areas, products such as the Z5800, with its amazing picture quality and superb 200Hz tech, help maintain the company's reputation. What is particularly surprising about this model, though, is the affordable price. ★★★★★



Panasonic Viera TX-L32S10
PRICE: £429
SCREEN SIZE: 32in
RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080
DIMENSIONS: 798 x 511 x 93 mm

IT IS INCREASINGLY hard for manufacturers to find new ways for a set to stand out. For this reason, it's difficult to get too enthusiastic about this 32-inch Viera, despite its sharp picture, lovely tones and good contrast. That said, if you're in the market for a competitive entry-level set, you could do a lot worse. ★★★★★



Sharp LC52LE700E
PRICE: £1,499
SCREEN SIZE: 52in
RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080
DIMENSIONS: 1,238 x 95 x 765

THERE IS SOMETHING about LED technology that makes any TV that uses it obviously better. The picture quality offers unrivalled clarity, wonderful colours and pristine detail. With this in mind it should be some recommendation to state that Sharp's LC52LE700E is at the very top-end of the LED market. ★★★★★

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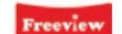
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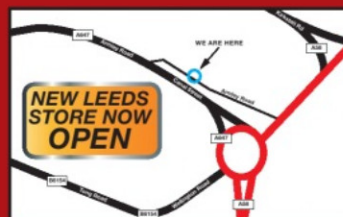
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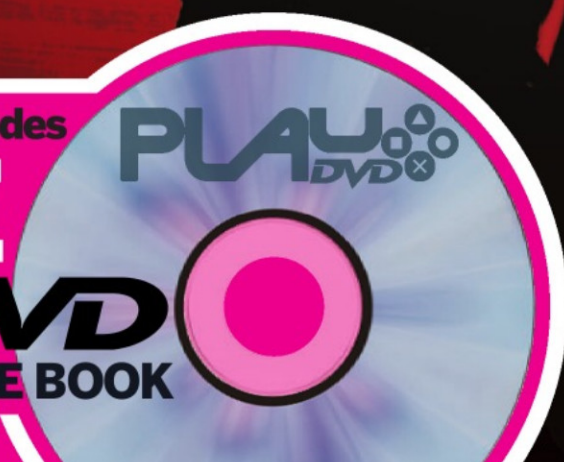
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Need for Speed: Undercover*
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F1 2009*
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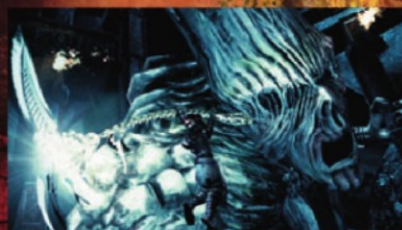
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